DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 375 738　　HE 027 833

AUTHOR　Gordon, Virginia N., Ed.
TITLE　Issues in Advising the Undecided College Student. The Freshman Year Experience Monograph Series Number 15.
INSTITUTION　South Carolina Univ., Columbia. National Resource Center for the Freshman Year Experience.
PUB DATE　94
NOTE　140p.
AVAILABLE FROM　National Resource Center for the Freshman Year Experience, University of South Carolina, 1728 College St., Columbia, SC 29208 ($25).
PUB TYPE　Collected Works - General (020) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE　MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS　*Academic Advising; Administrator Role; Career Counseling; College Administration; *College Students; Community Colleges; Counselor Training; Developmental Programs; *Educational Strategies; Faculty Advisers; Gifted; Higher Education; High Risk Students; *Majors (Students); Program Evaluation; Resource Materials; Seminars
IDENTIFIERS　*Undecided Students

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this monograph is to update the research and general information that has been generated about undecided students in the past decade and to offer some practical perspectives on how to administer, advise, and counsel such students. Thirteen chapters include: (1) "A Profile of Undecided College Students" (Willard C. Lewallen); (2) "Administrative Approaches to Advising Undecided Students" (Wesley R. Habley); (3) "Developmental Advising for Undecided Students: Rethinking the Relationships" (Ned S. Laff); (4) "Essential Resources for Advising Undecided Students" (Ray K. Zarvell and Diane Rigley); (5) "Career Advising for the Undecided Student" (Margaret Bogenschutz); (6) "Freshman Seminars and Other Courses for Undecided Students" (Betsy O. Barefoot and Douglas N. Searcy); (7) "Advising Special Groups Within the Undecided Student Population" (J. D. Beatty); (8) "Major-Changers: A Special Type of Undecided Student" (George E. Steele); (9) "Undecided Students in Community Colleges" (Margaret C. King and Thaddeus M. Raushi); (10) "Training Advisors To Work with Undecided Students" (Ralph Anttonen); (11) "Evaluating Advising Programs for Undecided Students" (Elizabeth G. Creamer); (12) "Exemplary Advising Programs for Undecided Students" (Mary Stuart Hunter and Dean Harwood); and (13) "Are Undecided Students Here To Stay" (Virginia N. Gordon). (MDM)

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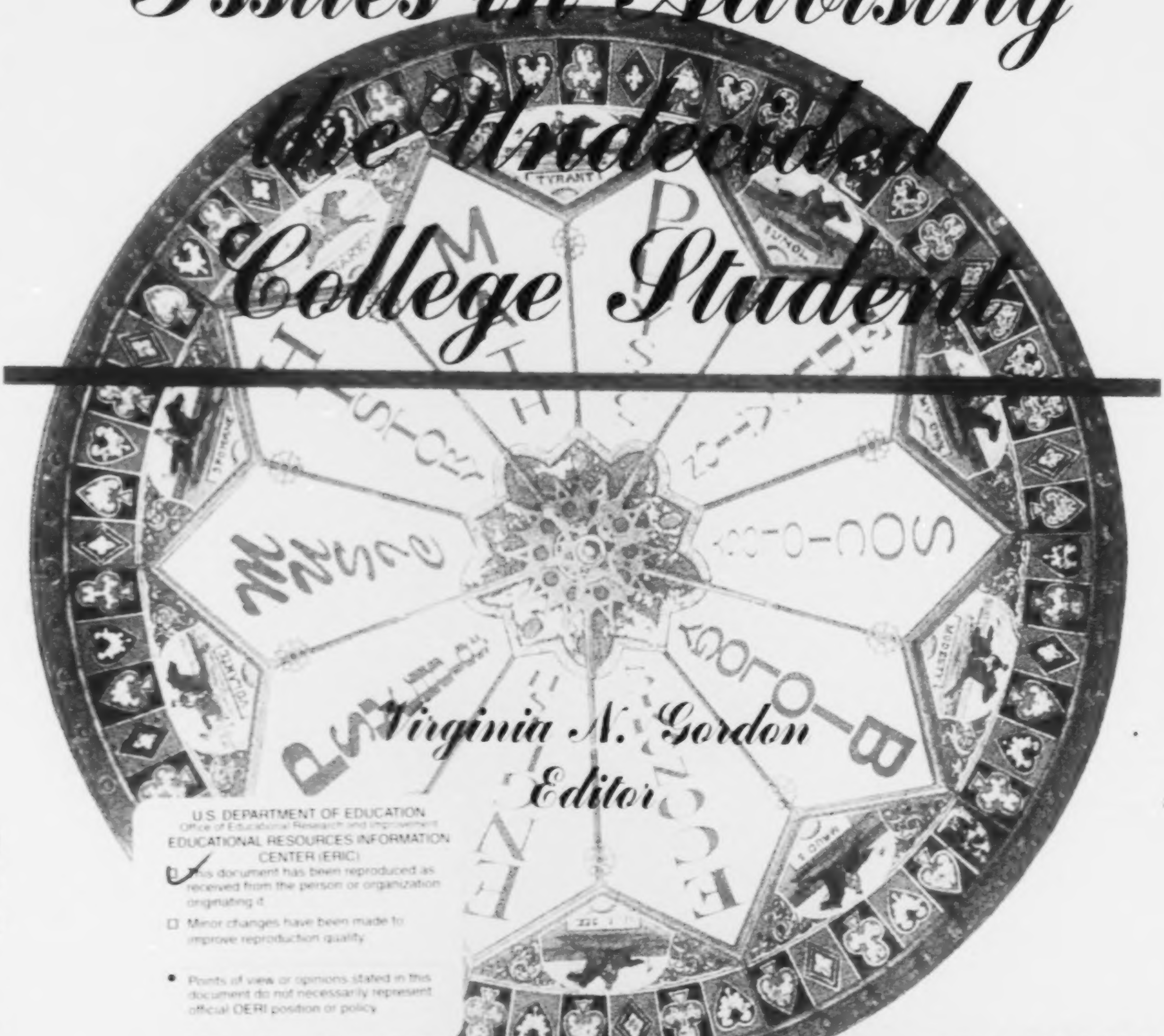

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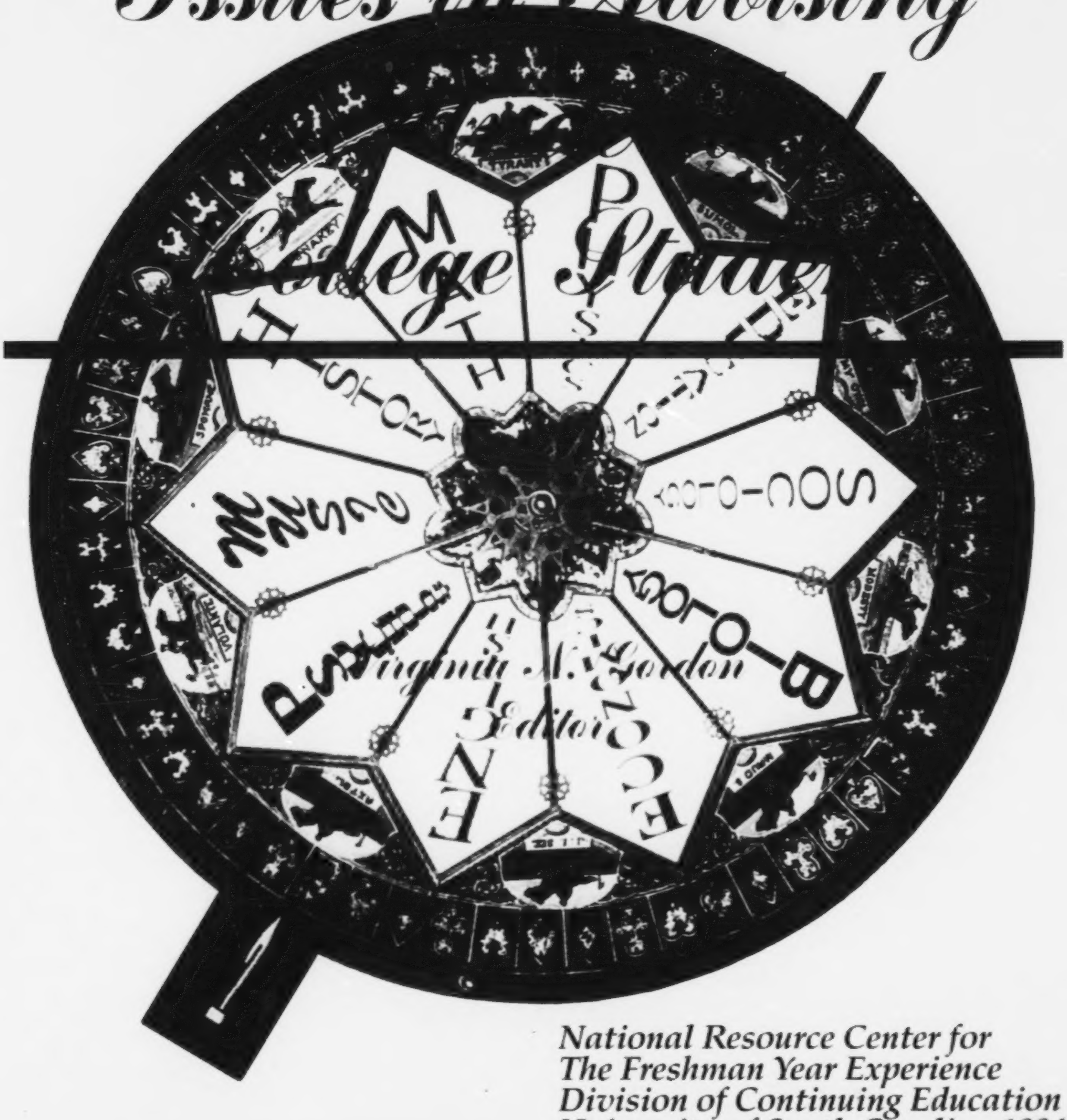
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Virginia N. Gordon
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Special gratitude is expressed to Randolph F. Handel, Eric S. Graff, and Konni B. Shier, Editorial Assistants for the National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience, for cover design, layout, and proof editing, to Dr. Betsy O. Barefoot, the Center's Co-Director for Research and Publications, and to Dr. Dorothy S. Fidler, the Center's Senior Managing Editor.

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Foreword

John N. Gardner

It is with great pleasure that I introduce the most recent monograph of the National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience on the important but relatively neglected topic of advising the undecided college student. This work has particular interest to me in light of the fact that I was a classic undecided first-year college student at an institution with no special advising and/or programs in place to address my complex needs. I hasten to add that my alma mater, Marietta College, would not be guilty of that characterization three decades after I entered as a new student. Marietta, like many other colleges and universities, has made enormous strides, especially since the middle 1980s in creating and sustaining special programs for undecided students, especially in the area of academic advising, career planning, and freshman seminars.

Much of this monograph has been the intellectual inspiration of the pioneer in the study of the undecided student, Dr. Virginia Gordon, of University College of The Ohio State University. This particular monograph is designed to remedy a very large gap in the scholarly literature left since she last wrote on this subject in her 1984 work, *The Undecided Student: An Academic and Career Advising Challenge*. No scholar has emerged since then to produce any work of a similar scope.

The National Resource Center has been especially interested in engaging in partnerships with national professional associations, scholars, and practitioners of the freshman year experience movement to bring their good ideas and good works to other educators interested in freshman student success. Thus, it was only natural that we turn to our friend and colleague, Virginia Gordon, to ask her to serve as editor-in-chief to update and take considerably further her previous 1984 work. The result is this monograph. We are greatly indebted to Virginia for her knowledge, dedication, writing, editorial skills, scholarly abilities and her vast network of colleagues in the National Association for Academic Advising who have served as chapter authors in this publication.

Virginia Gordon concludes this monograph by raising the all important question: are undecided students here to stay? While the jury is certainly out on that long range question, it's very apparent these students are with us now and hence the need is now for this monograph. I invite you to read, digest, and apply this work for the needs of this very special, complex, and important population of first-year college men and women. I introduce this publication with great appreciation to all of our contributing authors, to Virginia Gordon, and to Betsy Barefoot and Dorothy Fidler, editors in the National Resource Center.

Introduction

Virginia N. Gordon

The undecided college student has been the subject of speculation, conjecture, and serious research study for the past 70 years (Crites, 1969; Gordon, 1984). In spite of these attempts to understand these special students who are unsure of their academic and occupational goals, they continue to be an enigma and a source of concern to college counselors, academic advisers, parents, and often to the students themselves.

The purpose of this monograph is to update the research and general information that has been generated about undecided students in the past decade and to offer some practical perspectives on how to administer, advise, and counsel them. As has been pointed out many times, undecided students comprise a complex, heterogenous group (Gordon, 1984; Harman, 1973; Holland & Holland, 1977; Lewallen, 1993). Some researchers approach them as indecisive individuals who have identity concerns or problems with career salience, locus of control, and anxiety (Fuqua, Seaworth, & Newman, 1987; Kaplan & Brown, 1987; Lucas & Epperson, 1988). Others view them as being engaged in the normal developmental tasks associated with academic and vocational decision making (Gordon, 1981; Grites, 1981; Peterson & McDonough, 1985).

The truth is that undecided students can be found who display many of the traits listed by researchers with both perspectives. That is the challenge of helping individuals discover who they are in the context of making educational and occupational decisions and setting career and life goals. Although the term "undecided" is viewed by some as a negative one, it is used throughout this monograph because of its historical use and immediate identification with the population upon whom this monograph is focusing. We are aware that many institutions are using more positive terms for programmatic purposes such as "exploratory"," no-preference", or "pre-major" students.

The authors contributing to this monograph have a great deal of experience working with undecided students. Their contributions focus on the theoretical as well as practical considerations in working with this intriguing population. Chapter 1 offers a profile of the undecided student as presented in the literature. Since undecided students are known to be a complicated population, this profile includes psychological, educational, and vocational perspectives on who undecided students are.

Administrative approaches for advising and counseling undecided students are presented in Chapter 2. Since there is no "best" way to administer these services, many models are presented which are based on a develop-mental sequence of tasks that need to be accomplished if identification and commitments to assist them are to be made.

Chapter 3 outlines a developmental model of advising which is the basis for offering philosophical and practical approaches for helping students make realistic and satisfying academic choices. Chapter 4 details the types of academic, career, and personal resources needed to advise undecided students.

Since many undecided students equate educational decisions with vocational choices, Chapter 5 discusses the critical tasks of integrating academic and occupational choices and offers some techniques and materials for effective career advising. Chapter 6 describes various types of freshman seminar courses for undecided students including objectives, formats, content, and other relevant components. Descriptions of successful courses that are taught nationally are included.

Within the undecided student population are many groups of students with special needs. In Chapter 7 special advising approaches using quality improvement tools are applied to these special groups which include adult, high-ability, minority, transfer, and disabled students and student athletes. Chapter 8 discusses another special group of undecided students -- those who change their major or are denied entry to the academic program of their choice.

Chapter 9 discusses undecided students who attend two-year colleges. Since many of these students have half the time to obtain a degree, the urgency of making academic decisions is different from the "four-year" student. This chapter discusses the mission of community colleges as it pertains to undecided students and offers counseling and advising strategies for two-year students.

Since the key to successful programs is a well-trained, committed adviser, Chapter 10 outlines a training model for academic advisers to help them acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and sensitivity that are essential for working with this group. Chapter 11 offers a comprehensive review of the factors involved in evaluating programs and services for undecided students within the context of student outcomes and issues.

Chapter 12 offers descriptions of exemplary advising programs for undecided students including the critical elements integral to their effectiveness. Chapter 13 summarizes some of the important aspects of what has been provided throughout the monograph and discusses some factors that might affect our perceptions of these special students. This monograph is intended to present a comprehensive profile of these special students and their needs. It also offers many practical approaches to insure these needs are adequately identified and met with the best and most proven strategies, programs, and services available today. College students who are struggling with critical academic, career, and life decisions are viewed as developing, aspiring individuals who need the timely and comprehensive assistance that we can and must provide.

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Chapter 1

A Profile of Undecided College Students

Willard C. Lewallen

Students undecided about educational and/or vocational goals have been a focus of concern among college administrators, faculty, counselors, academic advisers, and parents for many years. Some view indecision as an unhealthy, worrisome condition (Hartman & Fuqua, 1982, 1983; Hartman & Hartman, 1982). Others see it as a perfectly natural, temporary state (Akenson & Beecher, 1967; Grites, 1981; Titley & Titley, 1980). Undecided students themselves have mixed feelings. It is not unusual to find some who are positive, flexible, and curious about being undecided. Others are anxious, apologetic, and negative about their status (Gordon, 1984).

It is estimated that 20% to 50% of students entering college are undecided about academic and/or career goals (Astin, 1977; Berger, 1967; Crites, 1969). The number of students who change their choices after entering college decided is estimated at 50% to 60% (Astin, 1977; Burns & Kishler, 1972; Gordon, 1976; Hoffman & Grande, 1979). Even at the low end of these estimates undecided students can comprise a substantial proportion of the population of any campus. Because enormous amounts of energy and resources are expended in identifying, counseling, and trying to retain them, it is important to identify and understand any common characteristics that exist.

This focus of concern about undecided students has been long-standing, and the research can be traced back as early as the 1920s. The focus is just as strong today as evidenced in recent national conferences, "Retention Showcase: Focus on the Undecided Student" in 1992 and the "National Forum on the Undecided Student" in 1993. Additionally, the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) Journal devoted a large part of its Spring 1989 issue to the topic of undecided students. With this continuing interest in undecided students, it is important to understand who they are.

It is the purpose of this chapter to review the research literature surrounding undecided students in order to achieve a better understanding of the many complexities of this special population. The bulk of the research concerning undecided students centers around the origins of indecision, the correlates of indecision, comparisons of decided and undecided students, and the treatments that move students from being undecided to decided. Since other chapters will focus on delivery systems, programs, and advising approaches, this chapter will focus on the first three research areas mentioned along with related issues and topics.

The Etiology of Indecision

How and why students become undecided has been a source of considerable discussion and research. A variety of explanations and frameworks for understanding indecision have been put forth. Tyler (1953) suggested a number of reasons for vocational indecision: opinions and attitudes of family and friends, dissatisfaction with an occupational role, sex-role stereotyping, and multiplicity of interests. Additionally, Tyler proposes that students often do not accept the occasional limitations and/or obstacles which may stand in the way of certain choices. When students do not accept these barriers, they are often reluctant to consider other options.

The terms *impaired* and *delayed* were used by LoCascio (1964) to describe patterns of vocational choice. Students unaware or not ready to learn decision-making skills are said to have delayed development. Students who have not acquired the relevant skills for vocational decision making are said to have impaired development. According to Zytowski (1965), avoidance behavior might explain student indecision about occupational choice. Some students might be reluctant to commit to a career decision because the idea of work repels them. Still others may be hesitant because of a fear of career commitment.

Harren (1966) proposed that in order to study the reasons for indecision, it is necessary to understand the "internal processes, functions, and mechanisms inferred from an individual's vocational behavior" (p. 271). Harren found students at the exploration, crystallization, choice, and clarification stages in vocational decision making as described by Tiedeman and O'Hara (1963). Students can be undecided because they are at different stages of vocational decision making.

Osipow (1973) posited four reasons why students experience difficulty with vocational decision making: (1) vocational choices that are not congruent with self-information, (2) students' lagging behind developmentally, (3) emotional instability, and (4) inability to choose between two desirable options. Osipow believes that retarded rate of development is the factor that causes the most difficulty in terms of career choice.

Holland (1973) proposed that indecision in career choice will result when (a) two choices are of equal strength, or (b) the first choice is blocked and there is no second alternative. Holland also suggested that an over- or underestimation of a person's abilities with respect to a particular occupation can also produce conflict in vocational decision making.

Perhaps the most recent area of inquiry into the origins of indecision has to do with examining family and life history (Eigen, Hartman, & Hartman, 1987; Graef, Wells, Hyland, & Muchinsky, 1985; Kinnier, Brigman & Noble, 1990; Lopez & Andrews, 1987; Mills, 1980; Schumrum & Hartman, 1988; Zingaro, 1983). These approaches suggest that factors such as family interaction, family values, parental influence, and dysfunctionality can contribute to a student's career indecision.

Several inventories have been developed to help identify and measure career development problems as well as the level of intensity of specific antecedents that students report as contributing to indecision. These inventories are most often used in research but also have value in determining problems that may limit or retard the career development or career decision-making process. These inventories include the *Career Decision Scale* (Osipow, 1987), *My Vocational Situation* (Holland, Daiger, & Power, 1980), the *Career Development Inventory* (Super, Thompson, Lindeman, Jordaan, & Myers, 1981), and the *Career Beliefs Inventory* (Krumboltz, 1988).

Defining Undecided College Students

The term *undecided* has been used to identify students unwilling, unable, or not prepared to make educational choices. A number of other terms have been utilized to describe this population such as exploratory, open-major, undeclared, general studies major, undetermined, and special major. However, the term undecided is generally understood because of its prominence in research and the easy identification with its meaning (Gordon, 1984).

While the term *undecided* is generally accepted and understood, there has been no general approach to operationalizing a definition for research purposes. The manner in which students are determined to be undecided has varied considerably. Some studies label students as undecided based on the students' expressed choice on an admissions form or survey instrument which students used to select from a list of potential majors or careers (Baird, 1967; Chase & Keene, 1981; Elton & Rose, 1971; Foote, 1980; Miller, 1956; Rose & Elton, 1971; Ruskus & Solmon, 1984; Titley & Titley, 1980). Some labeled students undecided based on measures from a career decision scale/instrument (Lucas & Epperson, 1988; Taylor, 1982). Some labeled students undecided through a personal interview or personal statement (Abel, 1966; Marshall & Simpson, 1943). Still others determined that students were undecided because they were not pursuing a degree program (Smitherman & Carr, 1981; Twining & Twining, 1987). Given this tremendous disparity in operational definitions, it is not surprising that the results of these studies have often been contradictory, conflicting, and confusing.

> *There is a difference between being undecided and indecisive. Being undecided does not carry any special negative characteristics. The indecisive student is one who is chronically undecided due to serious psychological problems.*

The Two-Dimensional Nature of Being Undecided

One aspect of defining indecision that has received little attention is the two-dimensional nature of being undecided. A student can be undecided about the primary subject to study for a degree (i.e., educational choice), or undecided about the occupational area to enter upon graduation (i.e., career choice). In addition, there are combinations of these choices. A student can be decided about one and undecided about the other, or a student can be undecided about both. Certainly, all of these possibilities deserve exploration and examination, yet most studies have focused on vocational undecidedness.

Types of Undecided Students

Most professionals would readily agree that there are several types of undecided students. Typically, the following categories are used to classify undecided students: entering freshmen, major-changers, undecided upperclassmen, undecided honor students, undecided student athletes, adult undecided students, and underprepared undecided students (Gordon, 1984). These classifications are convenient for administrative purposes. Development and delivery of services are easier when students are categorized, despite the fact that any given student can fall easily into several of these categories simultaneously.

A recent line of inquiry has found multiple subtypes within the undecided population (Holland & Holland, 1977; Jones & Chenery, 1980; Larson, Heppner, Ham & Dugan, 1988; Lucas & Epperson, 1988, 1990; Newman, Fuqua, & Minger, 1990). The principle concept guiding these studies is that vocational indecision may not necessarily be a unitary trait. As Holland and Holland (1977) state, "perhaps we have been too concerned with finding a few explicit variables and too little concerned with discovering the broad patterns suggested by a host of poorly defined variables. It may be useful to consider undecided people as comprising multiple subtypes rather than a single type" (p. 412). Cluster analysis has been the primary statistical methodology employed in trying to identify various types of undecided students. Larson et al. (1988) found four distinct subtypes: (a) planless avoiders, (b) informed indecisives, (c) confident, but uninformed, and (d) uniformed. Lucas and Epperson (1988) found five types:

(a) happy and work oriented, (b) anxious and unclear on goals, (c) undecided and limited interests, (d) caught in a dilemma, and (e) happy and playful. Most researchers agree that finding multiple subtypes has significant implications for counseling/advising undecided students. Different strategies and approaches would be employed depending on the specific characteristics or traits of the undecided student.

Undecided vs. Indecisive

There has been considerable evidence and support for the notion that there is a difference between being *undecided* and *indecisive*. It is generally believed that being undecided does not carry any special negative, debilitating characteristics. However, being indecisive is viewed as extremely problematic. Hartman and Fuqua (1983) suggest that the indecisive student is one who is chronically undecided due to serious psychological problems. Holland and Holland (1977) suggest a student is indecisive because of a "life history in which a person has failed to acquire the necessary cultural involvement, self-confidence, tolerance for ambiguity, sense of identity, self and environmental knowledge to cope with vocational decision making as well as with other common problems" (p. 413). Other studies have supported the difference between being undecided and indecisiveness (Hartman, Fuqua, & Blum, 1985; Hartman, Fuqua, Blum, & Hartman, 1985; Van Matre & Cooper, 1984). It is generally agreed that the indecisive student must deal first with the presenting psychological issues before resolving career decision problems.

Characteristics of Undecided College Students

Research on undecided students has examined a variety of personal variables and characteristics such as interests, aptitudes, abilities, achievement, family background, risk-taking tendencies, levels of anxiety, and self-identity issues. Many of these studies describe students who are undecided by identifying variables related to indecision. Other investigations use a variety of measures to compare undecided students to decided students.

Correlates of Indecision

Of all the correlates of indecision in the research literature, the variable found most often associated with indecision has been anxiety. Goodstein (1965) describes two types of undecided students based on anxiety. For the first type, anxiety stems from failure to have made an educational or vocational choice. In other words, the anxiety is brought about by not having developed adequate decision-making skills. This type of anxiety is viewed as playing a minor role in the indecision problem. For the second type of undecided student, anxiety is a major reason for indecision. The person finds the anxiety associated with the decision-making process debilitating and has difficulty reaching decisions about anything. The choice process itself is anxiety arousing. Numerous studies have found a relationship between various measures of anxiety and career indecision (Appel, Haak, & Witzke, 1970; Fuqua, Newman, & Seaworth, 1988; Fuqua, Seaworth, & Newman, 1987; Hawkins, Bradley, & White, 1977; Kaplan & Brown, 1987; Kimes & Troth, 1974; Mendonca & Seiss, 1976; Newman, Fuqua, & Seaworth, 1989).

Another variable often found to be associated with career indecision is self-identity. Super (1957) suggested that choosing an occupation involves assessing the congruence of occupation and self-concept. When a person's concept of self is confused, unsolidified, or distorted, making comparisons becomes difficult. Hence, identity concerns can contribute to difficulties in choosing a vocation. Several studies have demonstrated a relationship between undecidedness and low sense of self-identity (Hartman & Fuqua, 1982; Holland & Holland, 1977; Kelso, 1976). Although receiving less attention, external locus of control has emerged as associated with indecision. External locus of control refers to the perception that events are unrelated to one's own behavior and often beyond personal control. Some studies have demonstrated a relationship between external locus of control and undecidedness (Cellini, 1978; Kazin, 1977; Taylor, 1982).

Comparing Undecided Students to Decided Students

Early researchers tried to understand undecided students by comparing them to students who were ostensibly "decided." In 1929 Crawford concluded that "definiteness of occupational purpose tends to improve the quality of a student's academic work" (p. 54). Williamson (1937) classified students into four groups based on the certainty of their vocational choice upon matriculation in college: very certain, certain, uncertain, and no choice. He concluded that "neither the certainty of a choice nor the possession of a choice appears to be diagnostic of seriousness of educational purpose, and therefore predictive of higher scholarship" (p. 356). This conclusion was certainly contrary to the dominant view during this era which held that vocationally undecided students achieved less academically than decided ones.

Baird (1967) conducted two comprehensive studies that examined differences between decided and undecided students. The first study involved students nearing the end of their freshman year, and the analyses revealed almost no differences between students who had decided upon a vocation at that point and those who had not. The second study involved college bound seniors, and the analyses revealed very little difference between undecided and decided students on measures of ACT test scores and high school grade point average. However, undecided students emphasized the college goal of developing their minds and intellectual abilities and less frequently chose the goal of vocational or professional training.

Some later researchers found differences between decided and undecided students while others have not. Chase and Keene (1981) found that students who declared their major early achieved significantly higher cumulative GPAs and completed significantly more credit hours than students who postponed a declaration of major. Taylor (1982) investigated the relationships among fear of success, locus of control, ACT test scores, and vocational indecision in college students. Results indicated that vocationally undecided students were more external in their locus of control, were more fearful of success, and achieved lower ACT scores than decided students.

Twining and Twining (1987) examined differences between students undecided about a program of study and students who were decided. Although considerable similarities existed, undecided students tended to be older female students returning as financial means allowed and who had specific career and personal counseling needs.

Entering freshmen in 13 fields of study were compared on demographic characteristics, high school achievement, college selection process, ability to finance college, highest degree planned, academic expectations, career plans, and aspirations (Ruskus & Solmon, 1984). Across all variables examined, "undecided" students were not distinguishable from students who declared an academic major with two exceptions. Undecided students and education majors were the least likely to expect high levels of academic achievement. Predictably, undecided students in greatest proportion indicated a very good chance they would change their career choice.

Undecided, decided, and multiple change students were compared by Anderson, Creamer, and Cross (1989). No significant differences were found in race, gender, SAT scores, or high school rank. The decided students had a higher cumulative GPA than the undecided and multiple change groups. The multiple change students and undecided students attempted and passed more credit hours than the decided group.

Lewallen (1992) compared undecided and decided students with a number of variables including measures of personal characteristics, achievement, and college experiences. The sample consisted of more than 20,000 students from over 300 four-year institutions. While some differences were found, the results of this study only add to the already clouded and puzzling picture when comparing undecided to decided students.

Persistence/Attrition of Undecided College Students

The roots of the belief that undecided students are attrition prone run deep and can be traced as far back as the 1920s and 1930s. In general, these early investigations advocated that vocationally decided students perform academically better than undecided students. Kelly (1925) stated that "the general relationship between the possession of a vocational motive and the doing of diligent work by students is recognized by most college teachers" (p. 73). Williamson (1937) summarized the widely held view and the basic premise behind the belief when he stated the following:

> In casting about for possible explanations of the failure of many high aptitude students to achieve scholastically in terms of their potentiality, one comes upon the suggestion that discrepancies are caused by lack of a definite vocational goal. It is often assumed that students who know more or less definitely, what they want to get out of college in the way of vocational training work more in line with their capacity and, therefore, get higher grades than do students who are undecided or unoriented vocationally. (p. 353)

Vocationally decided students were viewed as more serious in attitudes and work habits and, therefore, would labor diligently to achieve a definite goal. The study of scholastic achievement and vocational indecision eventually leads to the study of the persistence and attrition of undecided students.

The research on undecided students has been voluminous in terms of student characteristics, antecedents of indecision, and interventions that target undecided students. However, research on the persistence/attrition of this group has been lacking. It is certainly common practice to label the undecided student as attrition prone, but the simple truth is that very few studies have directly examined the persistence/attrition of undecided students.

The persistence behavior of those certain about vocational and/or academic goals and those uncertain was examined by Abel (1966). Uncertain students with GPAs below 2.00 had a significantly higher attrition rate (75%) than all other students (37%). Rice (1983) found that of students enrolled in a fall term, 68% returned in the spring and 42% returned the subsequent fall. When compared to returning students, nonreturning students were significantly more likely to be readmitted students, to be undecided about their academic major, to attempt few semester hours, and to have lower GPAs.

Foote (1980) examined the differences between those with a stated academic major and those who were undetermined. Significantly more determined students remained in school after two years than the undetermined students. Although 60% of the determined group were no longer enrolled, 82% of the undetermined group dropped out.

Withdrawing, nonreturning, and continuing students were compared in terms of their persistence (Daubman & Johnson, 1982). The authors found more undecided students among the withdrawing group than the nonreturning or continuing groups. In addition, they found more withdrawing students tended to live off campus and left school due to academic difficulties, school-work conflicts, or personal problems. They also found continuing students had considerable interaction with students and faculty outside of class while withdrawing students had little of this kind of interaction. Other studies have found undecided students to be attrition prone (Muskat, 1979; Reyes & Withers, 1983; Smitherman & Carr, 1981; Wessel, Engle, & Smidchens, 1978).

Condron (1979) conducted one of the few studies that found undecided students not to be attrition prone. Ninety percent of the decided students completed the bachelor's degree while 86% of undecided students completed the degree. Statistically there was no significant difference in the graduation rate of the two groups. When Titley and Titley (1980, 1985) examined the persistence of students who were uncertain, tentative, and certain about major choice, a six-year follow-up found no significant differences between the certain and uncertain groups.

Probably the most often cited study when making claims about undecided students being attrition prone is Beal and Noel's (1980) *What Works in Student Retention.* This national survey was conducted to identify, analyze, and compile information about campus action programs and efforts for improving student retention in higher education. Over 900 institutions participated in the survey. While the survey was designed to solicit a wide range of information concerning retention, one aspect focused on "the positive and negative characteristics of institutions that might relate to attrition or retention" (Beal & Noel, 1980, p. 15). The majority of respondents to the survey were student affairs administrators and academic affairs administrators (e.g., dean of instruction, dean of students). Instructional faculty were not included as respondents to the survey. Respondents were asked to rate factors related to students being dropout prone. Four factors emerged consistently as being the most important: low academic achievement, limited educational aspirations, indecision about major/career goal, and inadequate financial resources. These findings were not empirically derived from studying students, but were the result of respondents' opinions, perceptions, and judgments. Unfortunately, this study has been the most influential in establishing the belief that undecided students are an attrition-prone group.

Lewallen (1993) challenged the widely held belief that undecided students are attrition prone. It was proposed that previous studies of undecided student persistence were inadequate because they lacked a theoretical framework for explaining and understanding persistence behavior and they suffered methodological shortcomings. Clearly, the explanation of student persistence is a highly complex, multi-dimensional college outcome, and to infer that persistence can be explained by a single student characteristic (being undecided) seems unwise. The college impact theories of Tinto (1975, 1986, 1987), Astin (1984, 1985), and Pascarella (1980, 1985) posit that a variety of variables contribute to the explanation of persistence. Persistence research over the last 25 years has provided ample evidence to support these theories. The fundamental premises of Astin's (1991) input-environment-outcome model were used to guide the multiple regression analyses. After accounting for variables previously established as predictors of persistence, no measures of being undecided emerged as significant predictors of college student persistence. Students entering college already decided on a major did not exhibit any increased chances of persisting.

Summary

Despite considerable research efforts, our understanding of the origins and antecedents of indecision remain fuzzy. What has emerged are divergent speculations about the antecedents of indecision. As Gordon (1984) so aptly points out "there are as many reasons for being undecided as there are students" (p. 75). Finding specifically what makes undecided students unique would assist in the development of a general definition of being undecided. Until this happens, all research will continue to be with "types" of undecided students based on whatever definition is employed. The research on undecided students will continue to be conflicting and confusing. In other words, making generalizations about these students will be difficult.

Some evidence has emerged in the last 15 years that high levels of anxiety, low sense of self-identity, and external locus of control are associated with undecided students.

Additionally, there is considerable support for the idea that there is a difference between being *undecided* and *indecisive*. The indecisive student is viewed as chronically undecided due to serious psychological problems that permeate all areas of the student's life. These other problems must first be dealt with before career or educational decision making can take place. The undecided student is viewed as being able to benefit immediately from decision-making approaches and techniques.

While the research on undecided students has been voluminous, few studies have focused directly on the persistence of undecided students. With few exceptions, all of the studies reviewed found that undecided students were more likely to withdraw, not return for a subsequent term or year, or not persist to the completion of a degree. These findings have certainly contributed to the widely held belief that undecided students are attrition prone. However, the findings have to be viewed skeptically and are not generalizable due to a number of methodological concerns: inadequate sampling, data collection procedures, different definitions of undecidedness and persistence, single institution studies, and nonlongitudinal design. It appears that the study of undecided student persistence needs an entire reconceptualization if there is to be increased understanding of how undecidedness fits into the complexities of college student persistence.

While research findings have at times been contradictory, most studies have found few differences between decided and undecided students. In addition, a separate line of inquiry had found multiple subtypes within the undecided population. Generally, it has been concluded that undecided students are a heterogeneous group and that it is difficult to make generalizations about them. Baird (1967) concluded that "it is clear that there are few meaningful differences between decided and undecided students. The similarities, in contrast, are enormous" (p. 14). Gordon (1984) summarized this by stating "overall, the research on undecided students, while voluminous, has yielded little in characterizing this heterogeneous group in specific terms" (p. 17). Holland and Holland (1977) have stated:

> Attempts to comprehend the vocational decisiveness of some students and the indecisiveness of others are characterized by conflicting findings, negative findings, or negligible findings. Although vocationally undecided students have been assessed in many ways and with a vast range of variables, few clear or compelling differences emerge. Instead the most striking outcomes of these studies are that decided and undecided high school and college students are much more alike than different and that the relatively few differences are conflicting and confusing. (p. 404)

Also, Gordon (1981) concluded:

> The list of variables studied in relation to educationally and vocationally uncommitted students since the 1930s is all encompassing . . . . Although many of these studies have attempted to determine what makes undecided students different from those who are able to make decisions, the majority found no significant differences. (p. 433)

All evidence thus far points to undecided students as fairly typical college students on the surface (e.g., measures of background, abilities, experiences). Because few differences have been found, it appears that undecided students represent more a microcosm of the college population than a highly distinguishable group.

Future research on any uniqueness that distinguishes undecided students would contribute immensely to our understanding of this group. Meanwhile faculty, administrators, and counselors at each institution must recognize the needs of the undecided students on their campus and offer the type of academic and career advising and counseling that leads to positive student outcomes.

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Chapter 2

Administrative Approaches to Advising Undecided Students

Wesley R. Habley

During the past 20 years there has been concerted study of the demographic characteristics, developmental needs, and academic performance of undecided students. In addition, multiple theoretical perspectives have been offered on both the nature of indecision and successful practices for dealing with undecidedness among college students. Although there are many significant findings related to undecided students, three specific assertions in the literature suggest the need for a thoughtfully planned administration of services for them. Those three assertions (Gordon, 1984) are:

1. There are significant numbers of entering students who are willing to admit that they are not ready to identify or pursue an academic or career direction.
2. The inability to decide upon a course of study is cited in the retention literature as a major reason for dropping out of college.
3. Many students who enter college secure in their academic and career choice of major will, for a variety of very viable individual and institutional reasons, become less sure or totally unsure of that choice.

To these three, the author adds a fourth assertion: the condition of being undecided need not be dysfunctional if the college or university designs and implements an advising program which focuses on the needs of these students. It is not acceptable for colleges to suggest that being undecided is a condition that will disappear as students develop; that students will find majors if they sample enough courses. Indeed, without well-planned administrative approaches and timely interventions, it will probably be the student who disappears rather than the condition.

Principles of Advising

In order to facilitate the consideration of administrative approaches to advising students, it is necessary to identify and briefly describe four major principles which guide the discussion.

A successful approach to undecided students must be focused on a developmentally sequenced set of tasks. In a sense, there needs to be a roadmap for the services which should be provided to meet the needs of undecided students. Although theoretically based, this roadmap must be definitive enough so that advisers (and students) can understand the tasks and use the roadmap to guide future actions.

The developmentally sequenced tasks must serve as the focus for organizing services. This is really an assertion of the adage that form follows function. It is not possible first to identify the organizational model and then the tasks which are to be accomplished. It is only through our understanding of what is to be accomplished that we can then answer the question of how services should be organized to best accomplish the tasks.

There is no single best way to deliver and organize services for undecided students. Although some might believe that the needs of undecided students may best be served by trained counselors, others may believe that faculty are in the best position to meet these needs. The questions of who and how these services should be delivered can be answered only after tasks have been delineated and applied to a specific campus environment.

Advising for undecided students should be an integrated effort. It is clear that academic advising cannot be done in isolation. And, as a corollary to that statement, advising for undecided students requires the purposive integration of advising with the academic departments as well as with a variety of support services which augment educational and career decision making. Of paramount concern, is the delivery of a complete set of activities which enable undecided students to accomplish the series of sequentially developmental tasks.

Based on the assertions and principles described above, an advising task model is provided, seven organizational models in terms of their application to undecided students are reviewed, and an approach is suggested for designing/refining an advising model for undecided students based on the strengths and weaknesses of both the advising model and the support services provided on campus.

Developmental Sequence of Tasks

As stated above, the delivery and organization of advising services for undecided students must be built on a set of developmentally sequenced tasks which, if accomplished, lead to the identification of and commitment to a field of study for undecided students. O'Banion (1972) first proposed a paradigm for academic advising which clarified the significant interrelationships among life planning, career planning, and academic advising. The five stages in the O'Banion paradigm are: exploration of life goals; b) exploration of career/educational goals; c) selection of an educational program; d) selection of courses; and e) scheduling of courses.

Although the O'Banion paradigm is conceptually solid, a greater degree of specificity is required in order to operationalize the paradigm for delivering services to undecided students. To provide that specificity was the intent behind the development of the Advising Process/Intervention Model (Habley, 1984).

In this model, 11 tasks in the career exploration/academic advising process are presented. An important aspect of this model is that there is no presumption regarding the skill levels of individual advisers. Rather, advisers must exhibit attitudes and understandings conducive to the effective functioning of the model. These attitudes include: (a) concern for undecided student development; (b) willingness to participate in both the advising program and the training necessary to implement it; (c) awareness of institutional policies and procedures; and (d) understanding the relationship between advising and other support services.

For each task within the model, an academic adviser may work with students to accomplish the task or, if necessary, refer students to available support services for assistance. In addition to referral backup, the model provides for continuous task-by-task feedback for confirmation or redirection of student planning.

The tasks in the model are the following:

Task 1 - Awareness of individual values, abilities, and interests

Task 2- Clarification of life goals based on awareness of individual values, abilities, and interests

Task 3 - Exploration of the relationships between life and career goals

Task 4- Exploration of aspects of the world of work

Task 5- Clarification of career goals

Task 6- Exploration of educational combinations leading to life and career goals

Task 7- Selection of an appropriate educational combination

Task 8- Exploration of elective courses

Task 9- Sequencing and selection of courses

Task 10 - Scheduling of courses

Task 11- Evaluation of experiences for confirmation or redirection of plans

For a visual depiction of the Advising Process/Intervention Model and further discussion of each of the 11 tasks including suggestions for activities to support the accomplishment of the tasks, the reader should consult, "Integrating Academic Advising and Career Planning" in *Developmental Academic Advising* (Winston, Miller, Ender, & Grites, 1984).

Organizational Models for Advising Undecided Students

Integrating the developmental tasks for undecided students into an administrative framework for the delivery of services requires the understanding of organizational models within which advising functions. Although it has been suggested that the unique character of individual institutions defies the identification of common organizational models (Grites, 1979), this author has proposed seven basic models for the organization of advising services (Habley, 1983). Since the introduction of the models, additional research has been undertaken to determine the prevalence (Habley & McCauley, 1987; Habley, 1988; Habley, 1993) as well as the perceived effectiveness (Habley, 1988) of the models. In the section that follows, each of the models will be described briefly, and applications of the model to the advising of undecided students will be presented.

Faculty-only model. This model, in which all students are assigned to an instructional faculty member for advising, continues to be the dominant advising model on college campuses. The faculty-only model exists on 35% of the campuses surveyed in ACT's 1992 survey of advising practices (Habley, 1993). Some faculty-only systems virtually ignore the developmental needs of undecided students either by assigning them at random to faculty members throughout the campus, or by using undecided students to level the advising load of faculty in departments with fewer majors.

Other campus systems, however, recognize that undecided students require more definitive services than can be provided through random distribution or adviser load leveling. In some cases, undecided students are assigned to faculty members in Arts and Sciences based on the premise that much of the general freshman curriculum resides in those departments. Yet other campuses feature a core of voluntary or selected faculty members whose advising responsibilities are focused on undecided students. Often, these faculty are identified based on their interest in working with undecided students and, in many cases, these faculty members receive additional training which focuses on the developmental needs of those students. Finally, on campuses which have integrated freshman seminar programs which include academic advising, faculty who teach in the seminar program also serve as advisers to undecided students.

Supplementary model. In this model, which exists at 16% of campuses nationwide (Habley, 1993), all students are assigned to an instructional faculty member for advising. In this model, there is an advising unit which provides general information and referral for students even though all academic transactions requiring adviser approval are handled by the assigned faculty adviser. Although it is possible that some campuses utilizing the supplementary model provide specialized programs and services for undecided students, that possibility has not, to date, been verified through research. As a result, it is assumed that the administrative approaches to undecided students in this model are similar to those identified in the faculty only model.

Split model. This model features an advising unit which focuses on the developmental needs of a specific group(s) of students. Although there are split advising models which serve underprepared students, adult learners, and a variety of other populations, the split model most commonly serves the advising needs of the undecided student. In fact, on the most recent ACT survey (Habley, 1993), more than three quarters (77%) of the institutions which reported they had advising offices identified advising exploratory/ undecided students as a major responsibility.

The split model is in place at 20% of campuses nationally (Habley, 1993). In this model, students who are not members of the target group are assigned to academic colleges or departments, most likely to be advised by members of the instructional faculty. And, an advising transition takes place from the advising unit to departmental advising when students have met a pre-determined set of conditions. In the case of undecided students, the conditions are usually the identification of and acceptance into a program of study.

Dual model. The dual model employed by six percent of college campuses (Habley, 1993) is distinguished by the fact that each student has two advisers: a member of the instructional faculty who advises the student on matters relating to the major and an adviser in an advising unit who provides advice on college-wide requirements, general education, policies, procedures, and the mechanics of registration. By definition in this model, undecided students are not assigned to a faculty adviser. As a result, advisers in the advising unit become entirely responsible for providing them with advising services. It is not possible to determine from existing research the extent to which specialized programs and services are provided for undecided students on campuses which employ this model.

Total intake model. In the total intake model, staff in an administrative unit are responsible for advising *all* students from point of entry until a specified period of time has elapsed and/or a specific set of requirements has been met. This model, in use at five percent of campuses nationally (Habley, 1993), appears to be a simplistic model. Yet, if the model is examined in terms of administrative approaches to advising undecided students, it becomes much more complex. The issue is clouded by the fact that administrative units which fit the total intake advising model are identified by a variety of titles which include, but are not limited to, University Colleges, University Divisions, Junior Divisions, Freshman Advising Programs, and University Advising Centers. Some of these units are comprehensive in nature providing general educational instruction, developing academic policy, and delivering academic advising for all entering students while others provide only academic advising for those students. The total intake descriptor also fits a freshman seminar program which incorporates academic advising and is required of all entering students.

The programs and services provided for undecided students in the multiplicity of total intake approaches also differ in some significant ways. In some total intake units, all students are provided with academic/career exploration support, while in other units only those students who identify themselves as undecided receive such support. In some total intake units, staff specialize in advising undecided students, while in other units all staff are assigned to advise the undecided. In some total intake units, advising responsibility for undecided students is shifted to an academic department immediately upon the declaration of a major, while in other units a specified number of credit hours and the declaration of a major must take place before advising is shifted to the academic department. Finally, some total intake models provide undecided students with in-house expertise in the accomplishment of all tasks in the advising process/intervention model while other units rely on referral to other campus agencies to provide such assistance for at least some of the tasks.

Satellite model. In the satellite model, each college (school, division) within the institution has established a unit which is responsible for academic advising. This model, in use on three percent of campuses nationally (Habley, 1993), exists almost entirely at large, research-oriented universities. In its purest form, each college has an advising office. However, in many institutions the autonomy of each college leads to the implementation of a variety of organizational models across the colleges.

Within the satellite model are two distinct administrative approaches to providing services for undecided students. In the first approach, a specifically identified satellite office provides services for all undecided students. This satellite office generally provides educational/career exploration programs and services within the office. The second approach features the provision of services for undecided students within a college. That is, students are asked to identify a "home" college even though they may be undecided about a particular major within that college. Specialized educational/career exploration programs may be offered within the college satellite, but it is more likely that undecided students in need of extensive support are referred to other campus agencies.

Self-contained model. This model exists almost solely, and is the dominant model, at two-year colleges. Thirty-one percent of the two-year colleges report the use of the self-contained model representing 16% of all colleges nationally (Habley, 1993). In this model, advising for all students from point of entry to point of departure from the institution is done by staff in a centralized advising unit. Staff in self-contained models are generally trained counselors who provide academic, vocational, psychological, and personal support for students. Because this is the case, self-contained advising units can provide undecided students with a full range of services which support the accomplishment of each task in the advising process/intervention model.

Integration of Tasks with Organizational Models

It should be obvious at this point that the importance of developmentally sequenced advising tasks when coupled with the variety both across and even within organizational models, provides limited, if any, direction for identifying the best administrative approach for meeting the needs of undecided students. Indeed, the design of institutional interventions on behalf of undecided students requires a focus on student needs, as well as consideration of the existing organizational model in the context of the fiscal and political environment which exists on a given campus. Essentially, the issue becomes one of designing an academic advising program for undecided students which ensures that the developmental tasks are accomplished regardless of the structure of the advising program and/or the individuals who deliver advising. What follows then, is a series of key questions which, when applied to *each* task in the advising process/intervention model, will provide a framework for the delivery of advising services for undecided students.

What types of programs and services should be offered to undecided students which will enable them to accomplish this task? This is the pivotal question in the series. As applied to the first task in the advising process/ intervention model the question becomes, "What programs and services should be offered which will help undecided students gain increased understanding of their values, abilities and interests?" A thorough consideration of this question is necessary because it will serve as a guidepost for questions which follow.

To what extent are services which support the accomplishment of this task being provided for undecided students on this campus? This question provides for the quantitative assessment of services. Answering this question in terms of the programs and services identified by answering the first question may uncover some immediate gaps in meeting needs. In fact, it is highly probable that the advising programs on many campuses focus almost entirely on student abilities with only limited focus on activities related to values and interests. Clearly, services which are not being offered should be structured into the advising system.

What is the level of quality of the services that are being offered in support of the accomplishment of this task? Although self-explanatory, this question must be continuously revisited. Student, staff, and faculty feedback on the success of programs and services is an essential component of effective advising.

To what extent do academic advisers for undecided students have the skills and the time necessary to deliver the services which support the accomplishment of this task? Corollary questions include: (a) What training is provided to develop or maintain skills? (b) If time is an issue, how can expectations be altered or services be reconfigured to provide the time necessary to be effective? (c) If skill development cannot be accomplished through reasonable training, what other individuals could become involved in the delivery of services?

If advisers for undecided students do not (cannot) provide services which support the accomplishment of this task, where on the campus are such services provided? The answer to this question hinges on the response to the previous question and is highly dependent on the skills and availability of the advisers for undecided students. There are two assumptions which undergird this question. First, it is assumed that different adviser types have both differential skills and availability to assist undecided students with the accomplishment of all developmentally-sequenced tasks. Although a generalization, one would assume, for instance, that a trained counselor would be in a better position than a member of the faculty to offer assistance with the first task. The second assumption is that if an adviser is not in a position to offer assistance, that assistance must be provided elsewhere on the campus.

What is the best way to configure support services to interface with the advising model? It is assumed, in all but very rare instances, that the needs of undecided students cannot be completely met with the formal advising structure. As a result, it is critical that the advising program and the external units which support it provide a seamless web of services for those students. And, on many campuses this is not the case. In fact, on many campuses, support services, particularly those which provide assistance in educational/career exploration, are not clearly delineated. Answering this question requires additional inquiry. Are such services provided in the counseling center? Are they provided in the career planning and placement office? Is there an overlap in services provided? Are there computer-assisted occupational information or interactive career guidance tools available? Where?

The systematic study of these six questions for *each* task in the advising process/intervention model should provide significant insights into the overall integration of services provided for undecided students. Taken collectively, the pattern of responses to the task-related questions can provide a framework for understanding the distribution of responsibilities between and among those who directly advise undecided students and those who support the advising of undecided students.

As an example, in the faculty-only model for advising undecided students, it is probable that the delivery of activities related to the early and more developmental tasks model will require more comprehensive support services than would be required in either the split model (focusing on undecided students) or the self-contained model. Additionally, this systematic study could provide insights into the delivery of services within the variety of total intake models which are employed.

Summary

Although there is neither one best way to organize services for undecided students nor is there a single adviser type who can best provide those services, there is a methodology for building a model which meets their needs. That methodology focuses continuously on the accomplishment of developmental tasks for undecided students and, in doing so, can lead to integration of services into any model used for the delivery of advising. In addition, the methodology can be applied regardless of the skills exhibited by a particular adviser type. It is hoped that the methodology will be as useful to campuses that are building an advising model for undecided students as it will be for campuses that are attempting to provide better services for undecided students within the existing organizational model.

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Chapter 3

Developmental Advising for Undecided Students: Rethinking the Relationships

Ned S. Laff

Since Crookston (1972) argued that advising could be both a developmental and a teaching activity, the field of advising has been quick to assume both roles. Crookston maintained that the developmental advising relationship "is one in which the academic adviser and the student differentially engage in a series of developmental tasks" so that the student actively shares the responsibility in his/her own learning (p. 13). Crookston believed that advising should be animated by developmental theory, should facilitate interpersonal awareness and growth, problem-solving and decision-making skills, and that the advising relationship should contribute to overall student development.

Ender, Winston, and Miller (1984) provide the following succinct definition of developmental advising as "a systematic process based on a close student-adviser relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational, career, and personal goals . . . It both stimulates and supports students in their quest for an enriched quality of life" (p. 19). Because of its inherent developmental mission, advising has adopted, as one of its concerns, the task of helping students acquire the skills and attitudes which promote intellectual and personal growth.

It would appear then that advising is well-grounded within a working educational philosophy which assures its position as one of the core academic concerns of the university. But a closer look reveals that the close linkage of developmental theory with advising has yet to be accomplished neatly. In part, this has to do with the nature of developmental theory, and in part it has to do with the fact that the field of advising has not generated the necessary strategies to fulfill its optimum developmental role.

Linking Developmental Theory with Advising

Many developmental theories guide our knowledge of the success and survival of college students. Such theories outline psychosocial development, cognitive development, identity formation, development of moral reasoning, and more. Issues of ethnicity and age are factors in development; and, as Gilligan (1981) and Baxter (1992) have argued, gender-related issues raise other important developmental questions. These theories are not intended to compete with each other. Rather, each attempts to elucidate a facet of an overall developmental process. To get a complete description of today's college student, as Peterson and McDonough (1985) have illustrated, we need to draw a composite developmental picture from these theories and incorporate them into an understanding of undecided students.

But we need to keep in mind that developmental theories are descriptive. Their intent is to chart the stages or positions which delineate markers for normal, healthy development. These stages or positions which developmental theorists define are, as Perry (1970) notes, cross-sections taken at certain intervals in the developmental process. The actual definitions of these cross-sections are synchronic, descriptive, and static, detailing the salient characteristics of each stage. Too often we find that those who try to outline how developmental theories apply to advising undecided students suggest that our roles are to identify stages and then plan strategies appropriate to each stage (e.g., Thomas & Chickering, 1984). But because these strategies focus on limited cross-sections they may only be relevant to that stage, and not to the ongoing process of development.

Development is rooted in the transitions between stages and grounded in "a continuing interplay of thought and experience" (Gilligan, 1981, p. 156). Developmental theories, however, do not delineate transition, the ongoing developmental movement from one stage to another. Understandably, this is not the fault of any developmental theory; it results simply from the nature of the constraints on any study. But if advocates of developmental advising claim that one of its roles is to foster intellectual and personal growth, then they need to situate such advising in the gray areas of transition, where support and challenge promote and drive developmental growth. This suggests that proponents of developmental advising need to delineate transitional strategies which are only hinted at in developmental theory.

Perry (1970) notes that developmental transition has many of the characteristics of the evolution of scientific theory (Kuhn, 1970).

> Strangely enough, we have found no explicit description of this kind of *transformation* as a phenomena in personal development. As a strategy of growth it would seem to deserve a prominent place, not only in a theory of cognitive development, but also in consideration of the formation of identity. (Perry, 1970, pp. 109-110)

Perry's (1970) stages of development--dualism, relativism, initial commitment, and so on--define total ways of thinking, not attitudes towards particular situations. Development, then, revolves around how we learn to think; how we learn to ask questions; and how we come up with solutions, whether it be the neatly formulated problems of the classroom or the "logically messy" problems of real life. There may be a transitional process underlying all developmental theories and common to all learning. From transitional process we can generate transitional strategies to guide developmental advising so that we may help students incorporate the skills of academic inquiry into their personal development.

Developmental Theory as Personal Theory Building

To appreciate what Perry (1970) is alluding to, we need only compare his work and T. S. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. We would find the structural similarities to be striking. In fact, we could sensibly argue, as Perry hinted, that the processes are the same. The essential elements of Kuhn's model are described in Chart 1 on the following page.

Perry's (1970) concern is to describe the "evolution in students' interpretation of their lives" which consists of students' progression through "certain forms in which the students construe their experience" (p. 1). Perry defines "forms" as the relatively stable relations of "assumptions and expectations a person holds at any given time" through which he or she construes experience (p. 1, p. 42). We usually refer to these forms as Perry's stages--dualism, relativism, and so on--but these forms also function as personal theories. This becomes explicit with the help of Kuhn.

Perry's (1970) forms satisfy the same criteria Kuhn (1970) uses to describe "paradigms." A paradigm is an accepted pattern of theoretical and methodological beliefs which affect how we see, interpret, and evaluate experience and how we articulate and solve problems. Paradigms help us make sense of experience because they appear to be revealing of the nature of things; they allow us to predict in an attempt to bring our assumptions and expectations closer to the nature of things; and they let us further articulate our understanding by helping us explore and interpret new experiences.

However, Kuhn (1970) is quick to point out that paradigms are open-ended, leaving problems to be solved and many facts which we confront through the paradigm unexplained. Normally, work through the paradigm is cumulative, extending the scope and precision of our understanding by assimilating the solution to problems and new data into the parameters of the paradigm and, at the same time, adjusting the paradigm to account for things which do not quite fit.

But research under the paradigm is a "particularly effective way of inducing paradigm change" (Kuhn, 1970, p. 52). Paradigm-based research is interactive and repeatedly brings up new and unsuspected phenomena—anomalies—which cannot be assimilated into the paradigm. Anomalies appear only against the background provided by a paradigm because it is the paradigm's context which provides us with a sense that "nature has somehow violated the paradigm-induced expectations that govern normal science" (pp. 52 - 53). The perception of anomalies leads to a "crisis," the failure of the normal problem-solving activities of the paradigm.

These points of crisis are critical because they open up the difficulties inherent in the paradigm/nature fit. Crises challenge previously

Chart 1
Kuhn's Structure of Scientific Revolutions

Paradigm:	An accepted pattern of theoretical and methodological beliefs which affect how we see, interpret, and evaluate. A paradigm helps us make sense of new phenomena and solve problems. A paradigm helps us explore and interpret new experiences.
Open-Endedness:	Paradigms extend the scope of our understanding, but they also bring up problems and facts which the paradigm can neither solve or explain.
Anomalies:	New and unsuspected phenomena are anomalies. They appear only against the background of the paradigm because it is the paradigm's context which provides the sense that nature has somehow violated the paradigm-induced expectations which govern normal science.
Crisis:	When significant anomalies develop they point out the failure of the normal problem-solving activities of the paradigm. Anomalies challenge standard beliefs and the generalizations of the paradigm.
Restructuring or New Paradigm Development:	Faced with a breakdown, science seeks a transition to a new paradigm, a restructuring which changes some of the generalizations, methods, and applications. Science can also discard the paradigm and create a new paradigm by keeping those beliefs which work and replacing other beliefs with new ones. This paradigm shift affects changes in world view, lets us see old terms, concepts, things, and events in different relationships to each other, and re-educates our ways of perceiving and acting in the world.

held standard beliefs and procedures and challenge stereotypes; they call into question the paradigm's explicit and fundamental generalizations. Faced with a breakdown, normal science seeks a transition to a new paradigm, a reconstruction which changes some of the field's generalizations, methods, and applications by discarding some previously standard practices and replacing them with others. These revolutionary paradigm shifts, in turn, affect changes in world view. Through the new paradigm we see old terms, concepts, and events in different relationships with one another. The shift opens up a wider range of phenomena, providing greater precision for explanation and providing better ways of perceiving and acting in the world (Kuhn, 1970).

The course of normal science leads to the acceptance of paradigms, the recognition of anomalies, and to crises. The successive transition from one paradigm to another, as Kuhn (1970) argues, is the normal developmental pattern. And transition is driven by scientific method.

What can we infer from Kuhn (1970) is not simply that Perry's (1970) forms are personal paradigms but that Perry is also trying to provide us with a sense of the revolutionary dynamics of personal paradigm shifts, left largely inferential behind the static descriptions of developmental positions. As Perry notes, we make sense and interpret experience through "forms of expectancies," which are personal paradigms. And meaning emerges as we interact through our personal paradigms with the diversity of real world experiences. Our forms of expectancies extend through our thoughts, feelings, actions, and interactions--they are our personal methodologies. They help us discover and expand our world by letting us meet the challenges of diversity with a minimum of incongruity. They provide us a coherent view of the world as long as we can assimilate the consequences of our interactions by means of selection, simplification, and sometimes slanted interpretation. Perry's model of intellectual and ethical development is described in Chart 2.

Our personal paradigms are also open-ended because we find they do not always work. They cause us to misinterpret and to make mistakes. These mistakes raise incongruities and uncertainties between the personal paradigm/experience fit which challenge us to come to grips with the limits of our personal paradigms. In turn, we are challenged to consider whether the assumptions underlying our personal paradigm-induced expectations give us a good working sense of how things are.

These incongruities are anomalies, and they jolt our picture of the world. Their build-up leads to a crisis and impels us to challenge, reorganize, and sometimes dissolve established beliefs. Crisis leads us to challenge stereotypic thinking and unexamined commitments. Crisis demands new decisions and requires reconstruction of old, and sometimes new, paradigmatic structures to resolve the crisis and to help us reinterpret our interactions (Perry, 1970). The transitional process by which we create new forms of expectancy leads to a revolutionary shift in our personal paradigms, and better ways of perceiving and acting in the world.

Developmental Advising as a Research Activity

Although much of the previous discussion has been in an abbreviated form, enough is outlined to suggest that Kuhn (1970) and Perry (1970) are talking about the same things--the pattern of revolutionary restructuring in the ways we view and interact in the world. Chart 3 outlines and compares the elements of these two theoretical models. For Kuhn, the emphasis is on the paradigms underlying fields of study; for Perry the emphasis is on students, the evolutions of their personal development, and how they create personal meanings. The same process of transition seems to underlie both. As Perry notes:

> students conceptualize more frequently in periods of. . . confrontation with incongruity, and when a new higher order concept has proved itself generally viable, it

Chart 2
Perry's Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development

Forms of Expectancies:	These are relatively stable assumptions and expectations a person holds at any given time by which s/he construes and makes sense of experiences. They provide a coherent view of the world as long as we can assimilate our interactions in the world within a given form.
Open-Endedness:	Interaction, the diversity of real world experience raises problems with the fit between a "form of expectancy" and experience. Forms are open-ended because the "form-experience" fit is not static and fixed.
Mistakes and Misinterpretations:	Mistakes and misinterpretations arise because a form does not account for new, different, or unexpected experiences. These mistakes raise uncertainties and begin to challenge the reliability of the form.
Crisis:	When mistakes reach a certain level we are challenged to consider that our assumptions and expectancies which underlie our forms or patterns of belief may not be giving us a good working sense of how things are. These mistakes jolt our picture of the world and raise questions about whether our form of expectancies is adequate to help us develop a good working world view.
Reorganization and Reconstruction:	Crisis leads us to challenge how we have been looking at things, and to consider either reorganizing our form of expectancies to accommodate for the mistakes or to construct a new form which will take into consideration the old form but also provide us with a change in world view, allowing us to reinterpret our interactions, resolve the problem with the form-experience fit and provide a better way of perceiving and acting in the world.

> tends to embed itself into the new *perception* of "how things are" until dislodged by some fresh incongruity. (p. 93)

Developmental transitions, therefore, may very well be based in personal research activities from which all paradigms are created. These skills of research--raising questions, seeking alternative views, discovering, interpreting, hypothesizing, and evaluating--are productive critical thinking skills, and they provide the transitional strategies developmental advisers and advisees need to promote and facilitate developmental growth. Advising grounded in critical thinking becomes an effective way to prod students' development.

In the arena of advising many students appear to feel the immediacy of the relationship between their education and their lives. In one way or another, students begin to face the confluence of their educational, career, and life-planning decisions. Through advising, students can learn to put their education into conversations about their lives. By grounding advising in a critical thinking model which underlies the basics of academic inquiry, advisers can provide students a practical context within which to use these skills to probe the assumptions governing their educational and personal actions. This is especially true for undecided students. Their very indecision is a developmental crisis which can prompt developmental transition and growth. In fact, undecided students may be in a better position than those students who claim they are decided, especially the estimated 75% who become major-changers (Gordon, 1984).

Chart 3
Developmental Theory as Personal Theory Building

Theory Building: **Kuhn**	*Developmental Theory:* **Perry**
Paradigm	Form of Expectancy
Open-Endedness	Open-Endedness
Anomalies	Mistakes
Crisis	Crisis
Restructure or Create New Paradigm	Reorganization or Create New form
Growth in Knowledge	Growth/Development

The Myth of the Academic Major

A myth pervades undergraduate education which is couched in the question "What do you want to major in?" As a result of this and other similar questions, students often think simplistically about major selection and assume that departmental divisions bare some educational relevance to their academic, career, and life planning. In fact, a listing of academic majors provides only a narrowly prescribed view of fields of study and virtually no insight into either the areas of study in which faculty are engaged or how a relationship can be forged between personal areas of interest and university education.

Advisers can, in fact, reassure undecided students that their indecision may be an unexpected boon. But by focusing advising on helping undecided students choose an academic major we too often limit our discussions with them to questions generated by college catalogs. And because our students' understanding is prescribed by the way college catalogs outline course requirements for a major, they never learn to ask questions about the academic substance of the curricula, the answers which we may take for granted (Laff, 1989).

By letting the myth of the academic major guide students' thinking about planning an undergraduate education, we could be constraining their abilities to make sense of their education and undermining what developmental advising should accomplish. In fact, the myth of the academic major discourages problem-solving. Advising based on this myth does not teach students the skills to integrate the different facets of their education or to build a map in which these different facets fit snugly together.

Transitional strategies share characteristics which are common to all good research and provide a model for developmental advising. Rather than view the adviser as teacher, this model would view the adviser as research director. Such a model would better reflect how faculty are academically engaged and provide us a better bridge between students' academic needs and what faculty can offer. How faculty pursue their academic specialties, both in content and process, provides the model students can use to understand how course work in major departments combines with cognate work in peripheral disciplines, independent study, and other resources on campus to create coherent fields of study. While the logic of such a model should be obvious, it seldom seems to make an impact on advising strategies (Schein, Laff, & Allen, 1987).

Consider for a moment that there are no generic professors of political science, English or biology. There are professors of political economy, literary stylistics, and immunobiology. Their academic work reflects interdisciplinary study because their fields of study demand that they consider the interrelationships among various areas of knowledge and how those interrelationships provide a perspective to look at interactions in the real world.

Advising should go beyond catalog requirements and should help students delineate their interests and synthesize them into an educational plan. Students need to be guided to a more comprehensive understanding of the fields of study encompassed by a single major and how those fields of study relate to personal interests and abilities.

Advising Undecided Students To Think Critically

Advising based in a critical thinking model has two purposes--first, to help prod student development and second, to provide undecided students the wherewithal to explore the hidden curricula of fields of study which underlie academic majors. The advising process should teach students how to think about their own education, its relationship to their "personally felt needs" (Bloom, 1987), and how to find the educational opportunities on campus to meet those needs. Advising should challenge students' assumptions and perceptions about the myth of the academic major and what they believe to be the relationship among majors, career choices, and graduate and/or professional study. While each discipline may have its own variation on the basic critical thinking scheme, there are common fundamentals which fit easily into the context of advising (Arons, 1985). The following strategies can be employed to help undecided students think critically. They are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive but are meant only to be illustrative.

Consciously raise questions. In order to facilitate critical thinking in an advising context, we must first consciously raise questions. We need to ask undecided students what they know about academic majors and more importantly, what they bring with them that governs how they think about higher education. (These are also questions that advisers should pose to themselves.) Consider students who are thinking about majoring in business, chemistry, or English. What do they take for granted? What do they know about the different fields these majors encompass? How many students, even as juniors and seniors, can delineate the declarative facts which make up those different fields and the operative knowledge needed to blend course offerings and other educational resources with their personal interests to develop an educational plan under the rubrics of these majors? These are critical questions to raise simply because the nature of these fields is continually changing.

It is hard enough, as most of us know, to get undecided students to ask any questions. In most instances, however, this can be done fairly easily and in ways that actually provide positive challenges to students, challenges which can help support their own interests. What does it mean, for instance, to major in business? What do students mean when they say *business*? It is interesting to ask students planning to major in business if they have any idea about the different divisions which make up a modern corporate structure. Many have no idea, and many have never questioned whether each division requires a business degree. Too many students wend their way through college without ever asking or without ever being asked these questions. Instead, they are given departmental sheets with major course requirements from the catalog. This is hardly developmental advising.

One of my former undecided students discovered that he could study poetry and language and still get a job. He found a niche for himself in an environmental engineering firm as a technical writer. His English language studies provided him the skills, his questioning provided him the clues, and his position allows him to pursue his poetry as an avocation. I have found that many undecided students have never been taught to ask the right questions to help them begin to think about the relationship among their personal interests, education, and life planning.

Identify gaps in knowledge. We need to help students learn to identify gaps in their own information as well as gaps between the current curricula and trends in the fields. This is as true for those pursuing careers after their undergraduate years as it is for those planning to pursue professional or graduate study. What do we need to do to help students become aware of gaps in the curricula and what must be taken on faith? For example, is the best way to prepare for medical school through the life sciences or for law school through political science, history, or business? Advisers need to help students consider the implications that developing trends in fields of study may mean for defining and planning educational goals. What could health care reform mean for students seeking pre-medical studies? What impact could the Commission on the Pacific Rim have on students interested in international studies? And how can we teach undecided students to build frames of reference from which to judge their understanding of educational plans and to differentiate knowledge which supports their understanding from belief based on hearsay, opinion, or guesswork? Clearly, if we let undecided students base their thinking on how academic majors are outlined in a college catalog, their gaps in information could be significant.

Probe assumptions about majors. We need to teach students never to rely on their pre-conceived assumptions or take anything for granted. For example, consider plans for premedical studies and the requirements for medical school. Certainly, students need general and organic chemistry, biology, physics, mathematics, and biochemistry in order to do well on the entrance examination for medical school. But do students need to major in sciences in order to be prepared for medical school? Certainly not. In fact, some students may prefer pursuing a liberal arts major and incorporating science and math courses into their studies.

One of my former students, now a graduate of medical school, was a pre-med oboe major. This student pursued music and orchestration but incorporated pre-medical sciences in a rather interesting way. Among oboe players there is a controversy over the resonance of artificial and natural oboe reeds, especially because artificial reeds have better resiliency. This is important for anyone who, like an oboe player, has to fashion a reed. In a senior thesis this student compared the biological and physiological structures of artificial versus natural reeds in an attempt to discover if the best characteristics of each could be blended. Science illuminated a part of art and opened up a finer understanding of the biology and physics of making sound.

This pre-med oboe major discovered that a music degree with appropriate math and science courses strengthened rather than weakened her application. The student, with the help of the right questions, the right direction to answer these questions, and the prodding to challenge assumptions was able to pursue undergraduate study in an area of personal interest and to follow an uncommon path to a common end. Yet all this depended on being challenged to probe assumptions underlying how students think about their choices of academic majors.

Help students draw inferences. We need to teach students how to draw inferences from the information they begin to gather. By teaching them to ask questions, look at gaps in their information, and probe assumptions, we teach them how to read their world critically and to make informed observations. We need to help them put those observations into a context of "If. . . then," reasoned from the questions they raise, without relying on the authority of the college catalog, academic adviser, or career placement.

What inferences can we help students draw from the hybridization of fields (e. g., exercise physiology and biomechanics, computer-assisted instruction and education, environmental policy studies)? How do we help students place these within a sensible context, one that can be personalized to their own interests? How do we help students discern the variables--some controllable, many not--which differentiate alternative paths? How do we help them speculate on where those different paths may lead? The answers to these questions are not as difficult as they may first appear. But we must intentionally raise these types of questions so that undecided students can begin to consider them. And we should be direct with students about how to begin researching the answers so that they can begin to seek their own solutions.

Challenge conclusions. Finally, we need to challenge students to test their own conclusions. They need to learn to test their own thinking for consistency and coherence. They can do this quite simply by tapping into the knowledge and experience of those within and without the college setting on whose expertise they depend. For instance, we need to encourage students early in their education to make use of simple information interviews, a common career development strategy. By talking with professionals in fields in which they are interested, students learn to test their suppositions against the reality of practice. And experts, authorities, and practitioners are easy to access. Faculty are experts in their subject areas. But physicians are experts, as are lawyers, historical preservationists, editors, directors of community affairs, and so on. These people can help students see developing trends, sense where course work falls short, and learn how to supplement classes with independent study and internships. Students can then begin to deal with the constantly changing educational environment and to realize that the hidden job market to which we so often refer corresponds to the hidden curriculum frequently found in fields of study (Laff, Schein, & Allen, 1987).

Root Organizing Concepts and Fields of Study

If critical thinking is one of the underlying components of advising, the other is an understanding of "root organizing concepts" (Lauer & Hussey, 1986). Root concepts, described in Chart 4, refer to the different ways we order, relate, and structure our insights, the frameworks on which we hang information and how we build interconnections between items of information. We are familiar with these concepts from the many ways we talk about them--for example, cause and effect, hierarchy, and sequencing, or the order in which courses are taken.

Course ordering or sequencing involves more than determining which course is a prerequisite for the next; it deals with consequences. How many students understand the consequences of their choices among different courses or how courses can be integrated into their learning? In practicing developmental advising, our focus should be on cohesion and integration, helping students realize correlations among general education requirements and how general education provides a broad yet coherent perspective, not just a cluster of unrelated courses. By helping students understand the processes of ordering and relating course options, we enable them to structure their insights, to see the interdependence of different elements of a course of study and how that interdependence is driven by personal educational interest.

Chart 4
Root Organizing Concepts for Advising

Order:	Involves the consequence of course selection, especially general education. How courses fit together builds perspectives and cognates that are supportive of fields of study.
Relation:	Involves the patterns of interaction among different course orderings, helping students perceive a coherent integration among general education, elective and core course work.
Structure:	Involves building the framework among course ordering and relation that is necessary to develop a field of study.

Pragmatic Considerations

There are a number of pragmatic considerations which must be addressed when advising undecided students. Most students, even if they call themselves "declared majors" are undecided in terms of fields of study. They simply do not understand what their majors mean or where their majors can lead them personally, educationally, or professionally. Consider the normal scenario for many students: they fulfill the requirements for a major and during their senior year they visit career placement office to find out what their undergraduate education has added up to. Perhaps freshmen who identify themselves as undecided majors may be easier to challenge through developmental advising grounded in critical thinking because their indecision frees them from the assumptions and beliefs that govern their thinking about a college education.

Few schools have majors in dance kinesiology, health policy studies, and community affairs. These are fields of study, the hidden curricula, about which most students never learn. How we teach students to talk with faculty should allow students to raise questions which will help them see the relationships between fields of study and academic majors. For example, health policy studies might be approached through several disciplines to include social perspectives on health care, the economics of health care, or governmental health policy development. Students could include courses in economics, philosophy, anthropology, and public administration. Students would fulfill the departmental requirements for an academic major, but with a "field of study" rather than an "academic major" approach, their programs take on a different character. A student is not simply a "sociology major" but is pursuing a field of study in the problems of health care delivery or the social factors of health and illness. This field of study links sociology, economics, philosophy, and anthropology into a coherent and meaningful whole.

Developmental advising grounded in critical thinking and focused on comprehensive fields of study challenges undecided students to think creatively about their personal educational plans and how their choices among course offerings fit into those plans. Developmental advising also challenges students to devise for themselves a personal rationale for an integrated core program of general education which leads to an "enriched" field of study driven by their personal interests (Boyer, 1987). It empowers undecided students (and all students) with the skills to make a personal investment in their educational outcomes. At that point, undecided students are far more likely to take ownership of their education, learn to address the questions raised by their indecision, and learn to plan undergraduate programs which are academically and personally satisfying.

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Chapter 4

Essential Resources for Advising Undecided Students

Ray K. Zarvell and Diane Rigley

"Unrequested advice is nothing more than criticism in disguise."
—Author Unknown

"Socrates went around giving good advice" wrote the young schoolgirl. "Then they poisoned him." Advice-giving, according to the sage wisdom of the young schoolgirl, can be hazardous especially when the receiver chooses not to accept the information. Similarly, the opening quote may be descriptive of the impact on students of the well-intentioned question asking, "What are you going to major in at college?" followed by suggestions to answer the very question. Asked frequently enough by family and by advisers, that question can lead students to believe they are somehow deficient because they have not yet chosen an academic major. In reality, it is likely that undecided college students, especially at the entrance level, are unwilling or unable to receive family or academic information and advice. Common symptoms verifying these conditions are exemplified through statements like, "My adviser was no help," "My adviser confused me more than I was already," or "My adviser didn't tell me anything new."

Advisee reactions are frequently explained through a number of student development models. For example, Perry's "dualism" describes students' view as right or wrong, good or bad (Perry, 1970). At the dualistic stage, students view themselves as having a minimal right to make use of their own opinions, and they have little ability for handling academic tasks that require dealing with conflicting points of view.

Langer (1989) describes another behavioral model that can also be applied to identify characteristics and behaviors of undecided students. In her model, she defines and describes "mindfulness" and "mindlessness" (not to be confused with intellectual levels). This model describes humans as experiencing the world by creating distinctive categories which serve as ways of managing phenomena (Langer & Rodin, 1976). The most fully developed results of this tendency are ideologies or systems of ideas that rationalize, sanctify, and justify individuals' lives, all of which provide them with identities, rules of action, and interpretations of how and why occurrences happen. When those categories remain static without increasing in number, or when they are not appropriately modified, a condition called "mindlessness" is in operation (Langer, 1989).

"Mindfulness" as described by Langer (1989) is a more deliberate behavioral demeanor guided by the development of new categories resulting from higher levels of maturity and living experiences. Mindfulness breaks one free of rigidly following rules and allows for alternative solutions to problems, experimentation, and risk-taking. Langer (1989), in an informal and non-scientific survey, found that individuals who had learned "mindfulness" found it easier to take risks, they welcomed change, were less fearful of failure, experienced diminished helplessness, and felt freer where they once felt controlled.

It is the mindful state to which advisers, as teachers, need to move undecided students, thus providing an intellectual enhancement that should enable those students to accept new information in meaningful categories leading to the fulfillment of the students' academic goals. Frost (1991) also believes that the vehicle for developmental advising is a theory-based and goal-related *teaching* process. Teaching mindfulness is not a formidable task, but one that can be assisted through student interaction and commentary. For example, a model that could be employed by the adviser/teacher is suggested in Figure 1.

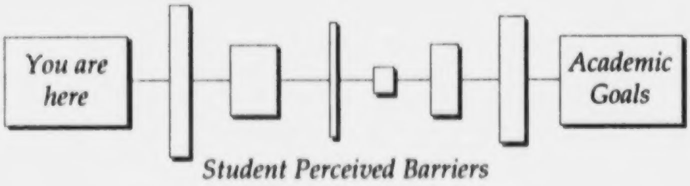

Figure 1. Academic Goal Continuum

In this model, the teacher/adviser facilitates students' verbalization of barriers they perceive to exist in the pursuit of their academic goals that include academic decision making and success. Upon examination through student interviews, surveys, or group discussion, student perceived barriers can be identified and classified into three categories: academic interests, career interests, and personal resources. The interaction and level of accomplishment in each of these categories (barriers) determine a student's movement toward the realization of his or her academic goals. When all categories (barriers) are breached, the undecided student has arrived at the point where a sound decision(s) can be made about an academic major and other academic goals, as illustrated in Figure 2.

The models illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 also suggest an interaction that allows for the categorization of "barriers" and the reality that many "barriers" have already been identified and at least partially answered with programs, opportunities, services, and information to negate their effect. Most importantly, however, the adviser/teacher in the enactment of these models is prompted to invent new terminology and advisement tools to answer those barriers that are not ameliorated through traditional or current advisement practices.

Advisement practices and resources that are currently widely accepted as important in the process of advising undecided students are defined within the categories listed below:

Academic Interests

1. *College and Departmental Guidelines.* A ready source of academic advising information is available from most academic departments and may be called a variety of names including "clearance" sheets, curricula guides, or "punch lists." This information can provide students with an understanding of the types of courses required for completion of a specific academic major. Students then need to determine if they have the personal resources necessary to be successful within that particular curriculum.

2. *Degree Audit and Other Computerized Course-Tracking Programs.* These programs are available at a number of institutions and can provide students with up-to-date information on the courses they

have completed, grades earned, and requirements still to be met. Brigham Young University, a pioneering institution in computer assisted advising, provides advisers with complete dossiers on each student, relieving those advisers of time-consuming record-keeping while concomitantly reducing errors in course requirement decisions (Noel, Levitz, & Saluri, 1986).

3. *Faculty Speakers Bureau.* A survey at Bradley University that sampled 98% of entering students ($N = 1{,}025$) revealed that 64% of the students preferred personal delivery of information on academic advisement. A faculty speakers bureau can accommodate those students' preference for personal delivery of information by providing academic information about disciplines, career opportunities for majors, and challenges that must be addressed for successful completion of the curriculum.

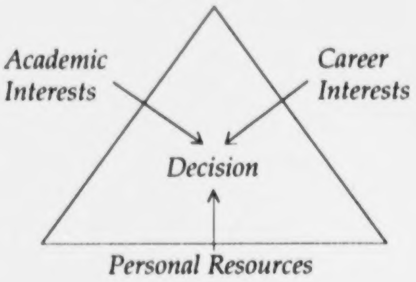

Figure 2. Components of undecided student decision making.

4. *Academic Department Media Presentation.* Some academic departments have available, or are willing to produce, video or slide show programs about the opportunities they offer. While not providing opportunities for personal interaction, these materials have the advantage of being convenient and accessible to students at a variety of times especially if they are housed in the institution's library.

5. *Major "Fairs".* Often held in conjunction with courses or seminars for undecided students, academic major "fairs" bring to a central location representatives of and information on academic curricula, programs, and opportunities. Each student attendee may then select a variety of presentations determined by personal interest and the "mindful" requirement for a higher level of awareness regarding institutional academic programs.

6. *Academic Advisers (Faculty).* Two types of advisers are commonly found at institutions, namely faculty and professional advisers. Faculty advisers are typically full-time faculty members who have also been assigned advisement responsibilities. The individual in this position is usually focused on a specific academic area and should be able to provide "expert" information related to his/her particular discipline. For undecided students, a variety of faculty advisers should be available to provide needed information for the academic and career interest categories as described in this section. Not all students may respond to faculty advisers, however, because not all are adequately trained or temperamentally suited for advising duties (Migden, 1989).

7. *Academic Advisers (Professional).* Professional advisers usually operate under a job description that specifies academic advisement activities as a central focus of their energies. Typically embedded within that job description is the suggestion of advising methodologies including (a) assisting student with academic planning, (b) providing curricular information, (c) interpreting academic policies, and (d) providing referrals to other institutional resources. In most cases, professional advisers are trained in student development theory and can integrate student receptiveness with salient academic information. For some students, not all, the professional adviser can become a mentor and primary referral agent to other support services when students' concerns or needs indicate specialized

services are necessary. Successful advising services can be provided by a professional adviser by enacting student development theory, and by providing students with both support and challenge (Carberry, Baker, & Prescott, 1986).

8. *Freshman Orientation Courses.* Academic advising and advisement processes have been described by many authors as being a teaching function (Weaver, 1987). As such, academic advisement may rightfully be included with freshman seminar courses especially if the instructor of the course is the designated adviser for her/his students. The addition of academic advisement to the curriculum allows for the integration of advisement information into the realm of academic requirements and promotes an appreciation for general education and topics related to the personal and academic success of students.

Designed expressly to facilitate the successful acclimation of new students to college, workbooks that address a wide range of barriers are increasingly available and often used in concert with freshman seminar courses. The following guides offer information and exercises to help students maximize campus resources, manage their time, study effectively and formulate goals and decisions:

- *Making the Most of College* (Rathus & Fichner-Rathus, 1991)
- *Right from the Start* (Holkeboer, 1993)
- *Strategies for College Success* (Starke, 1993)
- *Your College Experience* (Jewler & Gardner, 1993)
- *The Master Student, 7th Edition* (Ellis, 1994)

Career Interests

Shadowing Programs. Shadowing programs allow students to experience, analyze, and learn on site about the responsibilities of professionals or employees in specific careers or occupations. Established as field experiences for career exploration, meetings are scheduled with students and various business or industry representatives at their base of operations. Being on site, students are afforded the opportunity for direct observation as well as dialogue that can identify positive and negative characteristics of particular careers or occupations.

Computer Programs. "SIGI-Plus" and "DISCOVER" are two common examples of computer programs designed to allow students an interactive experience with large amounts of information. These and similar programs are "hybrid" career development tools in that they both assess students' interests, then develop those interests in alignment with career opportunities and characteristics. A study conducted at the University of Virginia tended to indicate that students who used SIGI-Plus demonstrated less career indecision than did the students in a career-planning course who did not utilize that computer program (Garis & Niles, 1990).

Career Libraries. Repositories for a myriad of career and career-related information are usually associated with career centers and house information provided by business and industry. These libraries provide employer-specific information as well as generic information describing job characteristics, demographics, and trends. Comprehensive career libraries afford students the opportunity for researching most characteristics of specific careers as well as companies offering such career opportunities.

The personal library of any adviser can be enriched by the acquisition of the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (1993), produced by the U. S. Department of Labor. Along with its companion periodical, the *Occupational Outlook Quarterly* which focuses on specific careers and job market trends, the handbook provides descriptions of occupations, the educational requirements for careers, expected working conditions, typical earnings, and projections for job availability. Another career planning staple from the Labor Department is the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (1991), a compendium of occupations that offers advisers another reference to help address student questions.

Career Information Events. Frequently career centers sponsor career fairs or opportunities for employers to visit campus and exhibit information regarding career opportunities for graduates. Undergraduates are also afforded the opportunity for visiting with prospective employers who can provide interactive dialogue and written materials describing employment opportunities with the respective companies.

Electronic Media Programs. Video and computer programs currently offer interactive and experiential opportunities for students to explore the world of work. Advantages of video and other electronic programs are that students need not travel long distances to learn about certain career opportunities, and visual information can be made available when it is not practical or possible to visit career sites.

Personal Resources

Researchers stress that advisement should facilitate student identification of internal and external barriers to their effective goal formulation. A portfolio of individualized information, derived from a variety of assessment instruments, can provide advisers with an important vehicle for student discussion.

Each student possesses a litany of personal resources such as interests, skills, values, and traits that may affect his or her satisfaction with an eventual major. A thorough evaluation of all those variables is vital for substantive advisement. In addition to the previously mentioned computer programs designed for career exploration, innumerable "paper and pencil" tests and inventories are available for advisers to measure the effects of (a) personality traits, (b) interests, (c) values, (d) abilities, and (e) culture and gender.

Personality Traits

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and other personality measures. Studies indicate that consideration of personality styles seems most predictive of successful academic major selection (Keller, Piotrowski, & Rabold, 1990). A study of test usage rates at college counseling centers reveals that the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)* (Myers & Myers, 1977), a personality inventory, is one of the instruments most widely administered by professionals (Graff, Larrimore, Whitehead, & Hopson, 1991). Many educators endorse the use of the *MBTI* as the definitive measure of personality for advisement (Apostal, 1988; Provost, 1987). Relative to the facilitation of mindfulness, Pinkney (1983) notes that the inventory increases "reflective judgment."

The *MBTI* is based on the Theory of Personality Preferences developed by Jung (1923), who found that personality factors "become the core of our attractions to and repulsions from people, tasks and events all life long." Therefore, information derived from the identification of a student's personality type offers implications to help address a spectrum of barriers: choice of major, time management, study skills, and interaction with faculty and other students.

The content of the *MBTI* was constructed to determine respondent personality preferences regarding four polarities: extraversion vs. introversion (E-I), sensing vs. intuition (S-N), thinking vs. feeling (T-F), and judging vs. perceptive (J-P) (Myers & McCaulley, 1985). Students' preferences between the dichotomies then create one of sixteen combinations, thus constituting their personality "type." With this information an adviser can make suggestions. For example, a student who selects a major in education, psychology, or social work tends to be very compatible with the personality of a student whose type is "INFJ." "J" students like to plan and follow schedules; an "N" (intuitive) student tends to study general ideas and concepts rather than details; and introverts usually do not enjoy classes that require extensive group discussion.

The *MBTI Manual* (Myers & McCaulley, 1985) incorporates valuable basic information about the inventory and has chapters on the use of type information to address decision making and career, personal, and educational issues. "To prepare (college students) for the academic and social aspects of university life," *Introduction to Type in College* (DiTiberio & Hammer, 1994) relates personality information to classroom and study activities and interaction between students. *Introduction to Type and Careers* (Hammer, 1993) offers the following items for each type: most attractive occupations, career trends, and potential obstacles for setting goals, gathering information, and making decisions. Lists of compatible majors/careers for each type are provided in the *MBTI Career Report Manual* (Hammer & Macdaid, 1992). Other interpretive books about the *MBTI* are *Do What You Are* (Tieger & Barron-Tieger, 1992), *Gifts Differing* (Myers & Myers, 1980), *LIFE Types* (Hirsh & Kummerow, 1989), and *Applications of the MBTI in Higher Education* (Provost & Anchors, 1987).

The "Keirsey Temperament Sorter," in *Please Understand Me* (Keirsey & Bates, 1978), is also based on Jungian principles and refers to the same personality types as the *MBTI*. Type descriptions and learning and leadership style information are given. Another Keirsey-oriented instrument, the Learning Pattern Assessment, is the focus of *Learning Patterns and Temperament Styles* (Golay, 1982). This book identifies and discusses the preferred class and study environments of four specific types of learners: actual-spontaneous, actual-routine, conceptual-specific and conceptual-global.

As well as a brief description of the *MBTI*, the instrument *Self-Assessment and Career Development* (Clawson, Kotter, Faux, & McArthur, 1992) includes the Survey of Behavioral Characteristics, which relates personality to creativity, and the Interpersonal Style Inventory, which can help students gauge the way they are perceived by others. Instruments like the *16 Personality Factors Test* (Institute for Personality and Ability Testing, Inc., 1986) show the tendencies of students relative to characteristics like *trusting or suspicious* and *relaxed or tense*. Also, a 1987 study endorses use of results from the *Personal Attributes Questionnaire* for advising (Andrews, 1987). Many multipurpose career planning books, like the *Career Book* (Kennedy & Laramore, 1988), not only discuss the *MBTI* but also offer their own inventories.

Interests

Each student, like everyone else in the world, is an amalgam of influences: familial, geographical, socio-economic, physical, peer, cultural, and societal. For decades, parents--their professions, interests, biases, plans--have most strongly affected the career choices of their children (Brown, 1970). Studies conducted in the 1980s illuminate a trend toward the increasing impact of friends on student decision making (Sebald, 1986).

Advisers often encounter undecided students who have succumbed to "pseudocrystallization" (Brown, 1970), a barrier involving the premature formulation of a decision based on erroneous or inappropriate influences. These students may then select majors for a variety of reasons: their fathers say a major is marketable, friends think it is impressive, jobs linked to the major are available in their hometown. Although influences are often very difficult to identify, advisers can explore the issue verbally to facilitate mindfulness in conjunction with interest inventory results.

Vocational Preference Inventory, Self-Directed Search, Strong Interest Inventory, and other interest measures. The *Vocational Preference Inventory* (Holland, 1977b), *Self-Directed Search* (Holland, 1977a), and *Strong Interest Inventory* (Strong, Hansen, & Campbell, 1981) are all founded on six career interest dimensions originally developed by Holland (1985) as an assessment of personality: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. The completion of any of these inventories can help students hurtle the expressed barriers such as:

- "I don't know what I like."
- "I have so many interests, I don't know what I'd like best."
- "I think I know my interests, but I'm not sure."
- "My mom thinks I would enjoy accounting."
- "I don't know if I want to work in the family business."
- "All my friends want to be engineers, but I don't know if I want that for me."

Results from the inventories, with their support materials, reveal lists of majors/careers that coincide with the students' interests. Like the *MBTI*, the *Strong Interest Inventory* is one of the most popular instruments employed by student development professionals (Graff, Larimore, Whitehead, & Hopson, 1991). A scoring key accompanies the *Vocational Preference Inventory;* the *Self-Directed Search* is self-scored; and the *Strong Interest Inventory* may either be scored on or off site. Three sources are valuable complements to these instruments in addition to their manuals: *Dictionary of Holland Occupational Codes* (Gottfredson, Holland, & Ogawa, 1982), *The College Majors Finder* (Rosen, Holmberg, & Holland, 1989) and *The Occupational Finder* (Holland, 1989).

Advisers utilizing the *Career Occupational Preference System* (Educational and Industrial Testing Service, 1983) can share with students a well-delineated profile guide that offers a graph of sixteen career categories, as well as lists of compatible occupations and majors. The categories are Medical-Life and Physical Sciences; Electrical, Mechanical, and Civil Technology; Outdoor Nature and Agribusiness; Business Finance and Management; Computation; Written and Oral Communication; Performing and Design Arts; and Instructional and Social Services. Two forms of the inventory are available: one is oriented toward college majors and professional careers in the preceding categories, and the other focuses more strongly on vocational occupations that may not necessitate a bachelor's degree.

The *Fifty-Minute Career Discovery Program* (Chapman, 1988) includes fifteen "Career Boxes" whereby students may assess their interests. Also representative of inventories within career planning books is the "Work Interest Checklist," one of several self-scored inventories in *Taking Charge of Your Career Direction* (Lock, 1992).

Values

Even as the influences noted in the preceding section affect student interests, the same myriad of variables create an environment for the development of student values. An historical chronology of influences relative to career choice reveals that (a) the interests of one's father were most influential in the 1950s and early 1960s, (b) many in the late 1960s and 1970s derived their work values from the socio-political milieu that championed human services, and (c) peers were very influential in the 1980s (Conger, 1988). The values of students of the 1990s and beyond may be reflections of characters from the entertainment industry (Dworetsky, 1992). Therefore, mindfulness of the role values play in the self-imposition of barriers may be achieved through the employment of values testing.

Edwards Personal Preference Schedule, Hall Occupational Orientation Inventory, Survey of Interpersonal Values, Value Scale, and other measures. Students frequently erect barriers that restrict them to selecting certain majors that they think will supply what is important to them. However, they are often unaware of what elements of a work environment they truly need for their own personal job satisfaction. The comparative listing in the Appendix shows the interpretive categories of the *Edwards Personal Preference Schedule* (Edwards, 1959), *Hall Occupational Orientation Inventory* (Hall, 1971), *Survey of Interpersonal Values* (Gordon, 1960), and *Values Scale* (Super & Nevill, 1985). The categories refer to potential needs that students may want their careers to fulfill.

Career and college planning books frequently offer worthwhile exercises to assist advisers as they integrate information about values into student self-assessment portfolios. Representative materials are incorporated in the *Career Book* (Kennedy & Laramore, 1988), *Strategies for College Success* (Starke, 1993), *Taking Charge of Your Career Direction* (Lock, 1992), *The Career Fitness Program* (Sukiennik, Raufman, & Bendat, 1992), and *Your College Experience* (Jewler & Gardner, 1993). For advisers who meet with students in groups, *Career Exploration Groups: A Facilitator's Guide* (Garfield & Nelson, 1983) suggests activities on values clarification.

Abilities

In a national television news program on ability assessment, Peter Jennings (1989) summarized, "The question should not be, 'is this student smart?' but 'how is this student smart?'" Students tend to have dichotomous perceptions of their abilities and aptitudes, feeling they are either "good" or "bad" at subjects. Skill-oriented barriers often manifest themselves to advisers in the following student comments:

- "I would really like to major in biology, but I don't think I can deal with the math required."
- "I'm good at so many things, it's hard to identify my strengths."
- "I'm weak in math, but I know I can still handle a major in business."
- "I got good grades in English in high school, but I don't know if I write well enough for a major in journalism."
- "I really don't excel in anything."

Timed ability tests. To measure general abilities like reading, math, or aptitudes like mechanical reasoning, innumerable timed tests are available to aid advisers as they help students sort their strengths and weaknesses. A sampling of instruments and what they measure include:

- *Differential Aptitude Tests* (Bennett, Seshore, & Wesman, 1990) - verbal, numerical and mechanical reasoning; perceptual speed and accuracy, space relations, spelling and language usage.
- *General Aptitude Test Battery* (U. S. Department of Labor, 1979) - verbal, numerical, spatial aptitudes; general learning ability; clerical and form perception; motor coordination; manual and finger dexterity.
- *Nelson-Denny Reading Test* (Brown, Fishco, & Hanna, 1993) - vocabulary, comprehension, reading rate.
- *Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal* (Watson & Glaser, 1980) - drawing sound inferences, recognizing assumptions, deductive reasoning, forming conclusions and evaluating arguments.

Untimed skill inventories. Levels of ability, or "intelligences," are often very difficult to measure because they come in many forms, including creativity, interpersonal skills, leadership, logic, physical abilities, and writing (Jennings, 1989). To assess students' sense of their strengths, the *Eureka Skills Inventory* (California Career Information System, 1993) is a vehicle for students to link their past accomplishments to 72 abilities in the following skill categories: situational, detail, movement, operational, numerical, communication, conceptual, judgment, reasoning, interpersonal, leadership, and self-management.

Culture and Gender

- "Women and engineering are incompatible."
- "I'm very interested in the clothing industry, but guys just don't major in fashion merchandising."

- "My family expects me to major in medicine or engineering."

- "I'm the first person in my family to go to college; I can't fail."

Interwoven with the constraints on student decision making created by parents, friends, and the media are societal influences that pervade each student's environment. Whether subtle or overt, opinions about culture and gender frequently establish ingrained barriers like the ones listed above for students and advisers to consider in conjunction with educational planning. Representative research on the issue reveals the following:

- The career choice process of Asian Americans has been dominated by an external locus of control, social anxiety and intolerance of ambiguity (Leong, 1985);

- The fathers of female students discouraged their daughters' selection of non-traditional majors (Hackett, Esposito, & O'Halloran, 1989); and

- Peers strongly influence which majors Chicano students, who fear cultural ostracism, select (Pinkney & Ramirez, 1985).

There are few resources beyond adviser-advisee discussions to determine the extent to which students suffer from these barriers, so advisers may benefit from developing their own interview checklist to explore the issues. An alternative measure of the individual effect of societal myths is the *Inventory of Career Attitudes* (Pinkney & Ramirez, 1985), with three categories: Culture, Value of College, and Precision of Choice.

Summary

Many academic advisers, especially faculty advisers, may not feel qualified to use many of the personal or career resources described in this chapter. When working with undecided students, however, knowledge of these and other resources for referral purposes is critical. Academic and career choices are interrelated for many undecided students. It is imperative that advisers working with undecided students provide the extra self-assessment opportunities as well as the career information resources they need for making realistic and long-lasting decisions. Not only undecided students, but advisers also must manage phenomena through "mindfulness" which breaks free of established rigid advising practices and allows for experimentation and risk-taking. When advisers are open to learning the resources described in this chapter, undecided students benefit; then, the adviser and the institution are providing a service that leads to outstanding advising.

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Appendix

Values Measured by Four Instruments

EPPS*	HOOI**	SIV***	Values Scale****
Achievement	Creativity/Independence	Leadership	Ability Utilization
Deference	Risk	Benevolence	Achievement
Order	Information/Knowledge	Independence	Advancement
Exhibition	Belongingness	Recognition	Aesthetics
Autonomy	Security	Conformity	Altruism
Affiliation	Aspiration	Support	Authority
Intraception	Esteem		Autonomy
Succorance	Self-Actualization		Creativity
Dominance	Personal Satisfaction		Economic Rewards
Abasement	Routine		Life Style
Nurturance	Data Orientation		Personal Development
Change	Things Orientation		Physical Activity
Endurance	People Orientation		Prestige
Heterosexuality	Location		Risk
	Aptitudes		Social Interaction
	Money		Social Relations
	Physical Abilities		Variety
	Environment		Working Conditions
	Co-Workers' Attributes		Cultural Identity
	Qualifications Factors		Physical Prowess
	Time Factors		Economic Security

* *Edwards Personal Preference Schedule* (Edwards, 1959)
** *Hall Occupational Orientation Inventory* (Hall, 1971)
*** *Survey of Interpersonal Values* (Gordon, 1960)
**** *Values Scale* (Super & Nevill, 1985)

Chapter 5

Career Advising for the Undecided Student

Margaret Bogenschutz

When we hear the words "academic advising" we often think of assisting students with choice of major and course selection. However, the implications for career choices cannot be ignored and must be an integral part of the advising process. In fact, what often adds to the confusion about choosing a major is the uncertainty of how a given major translates into "every day, for-the-rest-of-my-life" work. Many advisers and counselors understand that while choosing a major does have implications for entry-level careers and direction, that choice does not necessarily limit career options. However, most students do not understand this; their lack of information about the world of work can create some fear and anxiety about the future beyond college, thus making decisions about majors much more burdensome.

There is another source of confusion for many undecided students. Astin (1993) indicates that students entering college were more decided about a career than a major. Students may be able to articulate a career choice but cannot translate this into choice of a major (Pfifer, 1987). They lack the information about what majors prepare them for the identified career. This is particularly true when the obvious route may not be one that is open to them. Jennifer knows that she wants a sales career. Her math scores are low; in fact, she discovers at freshman orientation that she needs to take a remedial math course. During her first session with her adviser, she learns that poor math skills may block admission to a business program, which Jennifer assumed would be the path to a sales career. Jennifer now becomes confused about how to reach her sales career goal. Without appropriate intervention, Jennifer may become frustrated, her self-esteem may falter, and she may begin to doubt her goals. Providing Jennifer with basic information about alternative majors that can also provide paths to sales careers can clear up the confusion about the relationship between choice of major and career and is the first step in providing Jennifer some sense of direction and hope.

Many students, like Jennifer, become undecided when their initial choice is blocked. Clearly, some careers have very narrowly defined preparation programs (e.g., physical therapy, accounting, engineering). When students prepare to study in one area and then are not admitted into that program, their self-esteem can suffer greatly. After helping students identify alternative careers that use similar skills and similar work environments, advisers can then provide undecided students with information on other majors that will help them to reach their newly defined goal.

Students have witnessed the link between career and identity throughout their lives. They have interacted with teachers, service workers, physicians, dentists, mail carriers, retailers. As students think about these individuals, they will find that their perceptions and definitions of them center around the roles of these individuals (Dr. Cornwell is my dentist; Jane is our mail carrier). These observations reinforce the close link between career and identity and, of course, self-image.

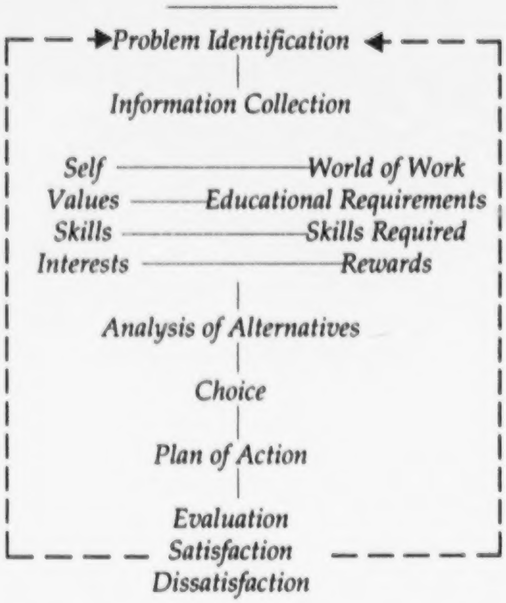

Figure 1. The Career-Planning Process

Many undecided students may experience an uneasy sense of self and are confused about the role they will play in the larger work world. Helping students understand how academic majors and occupational fields may have *indirect* as well as direct connections is critical. It is also important to help students identify realistic choices based upon their abilities, interests, and values and to provide information about alternative paths to different careers.

Students often do not know what they need in order to make decisions about a major or career. The perceived need is more likely to be: "I need a major!" or "I need to know what to do with my major when I graduate!" and, of course, "I need a job!" Advisers can help students understand the career planning process and the information required for making sound and realistic decisions (Ettinger, 1991). Following this process will help break down the larger challenges described above into more manageable steps.

Knowledge of the Career-Planning Process

Knowledge of the career-planning process is a critical need for students in two ways: first, students need to understand that making career decisions is a process that evolves over time; and second, students need to understand what the process is.

Peggy is a student who witnessed her brother attending college for four years, earning a degree in one field, then deciding his real career interests lay in another field. A sophomore, Peggy states to her counselor, "I don't want this to happen to me. I want to make a decision now, and I will stick with that decision." Peggy is also a student who needs closure; she is uncomfortable with the fact that making career decisions is a process requiring time to unfold. Her counselor needs to affirm this with her, yet explain the benefits of fully analyzing self and exploring career options. One of the benefits, in fact, is an increased likelihood that once a decision is made, Peggy will be more apt to stick with it. Many students do not feel they have time for the process to unfold, especially if they are seeking career assistance their senior year. But taking the time to analyze choices fully, even if it means a slight delay in graduation, will pay off in the long run if it increases the chances for satisfaction with one's chosen field.

The career-planning model outlined in Figure 1 is used by many career-planning specialists and presents a very rational approach to career decision making comprised of the following four components: gathering information about self, identifying alternatives and examining each one systematically, then choosing an alternative that fits. This particular model encourages testing alternatives and emphasizes the cyclic nature of the process, including evaluating choices on an ongoing basis. The concept of fit is central to the process, and "fit" needs to be evaluated periodically as individual needs, interests, and values change over time.

Once students learn the concepts of this process they have a better understanding of what is needed in order to make decisions. Many students also find comfort and reassurance in a systematic, goal-oriented process which is likely to provide a positive outcome (clearer direction, choice of major, options to explore). Additionally, students learn that this is a lifetime process, and they develop skills (in self-analysis and analysis of the world of work) that can be used throughout their entire career. One word of caution: students who tend to be less systematic and more spontaneous when making decisions in general may resist this approach and may need more guidance and encouragement while working through the process.

Need for Information

Information is empowering. This is certainly the case for students faced with decisions about majors and careers. Most undecided students simply do not know enough about the world of work and have not been exposed in significant ways to a variety of career areas. They may find the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (U.S. Department of Labor, 1993) to be of some assistance. Some students select the occupational choices of their parents, primarily because these careers are well known to them. The career-planning process described earlier is a process that relies on gathering and analyzing information. The steps in the process are outlined below, and for each step the kind of information needed to be gathered and analyzed is identified. (Note: Information about specific interventions to use for each of the steps below will be identified in the next section of this chapter.)

1. *Self-analysis.* Identification of one's interests, abilities, work values and other factors, such as temperament, provide information about oneself against which information about careers and majors can be compared. The goal is to strive for the identification of several options, each of which holds the potential for a good "fit."
2. *Career and majors.* What are all the options? Based on information learned about personal interests, aptitudes, values, skills, temperaments, and other qualities, students can begin to narrow down the list into manageable choices for further exploration. At this point the list comprises careers and majors that "sound" interesting or are "coded" or "classified" into types similar to students' own typologies (identified through various assessments).
3. *Analysis of major alternatives.* Students who identify potential *majors* need to find out for each major as a minimum (a) the course requirements, (b) the prerequisites for admission to the major, and (c) the career options for students in this major.
4. *Analysis of career alternatives.* Students who identify potential *careers* need to find out minimally for each career (a) the majors that prepare one for this career, (b) the skills necessary to succeed in this area, (c) the predicted job market for this field when they graduate, (d) entry level positions and possible career paths in this field, (e) the lifestyle implications of job demands in this field, (f) starting salaries and potential for advancement in this field.

Note that choices about majors and careers are interrelated. Students may want to focus broadly on career choices first and find out what majors best prepare them for various careers. Other students commit to a major first and then explore career options. It may be easier to work with students who have identified several careers to explore and help them analyze choices of major. Advisers, however, must deal with students where they are when they come for assistance. In fact, students who have made decisions about a major and need help with career choices based on that major, may have already dedicated much of their academic career to that choice. Self-assessment at this stage is not too late! Helping students understand their interests, skills, and values prior to focusing on career opportunities that are open to them with their selected major will help them identify what types of entry level jobs to pursue and in what kinds of organizations these jobs will be found. In fact, all seniors should be encouraged to go through this process before their job search. Even a field as specific as accounting offers choices in public accounting, corporate accounting, and government work, not to mention additional career options, such as consulting or financial analysis.

5. *Choice and evaluation.* With all the information gathered, students need to establish an action plan that will lead to a choice of major or academic program. Students will continue to test out the choice as they engage in their academic program and as they enter the world of work. Periodic evaluation is encouraged to assess the level of "fit" over time.

Many people decide to change jobs or careers after several years in the work force. Students who are taught the career planning process outlined above are better able to make meaningful changes because they have learned the skills associated with the process of assessing options. This process can be used again and again.

Interventions

This section will discuss specific interventions to use with students while assisting them with career decisions. Interventions will be presented from the career-planning perspective. A list of interventions for each step in the career-planning process outlined earlier will be identified.

Developmental Readiness. Knowledge of human development and college student development theories can help academic advisers and counselors understand the salient issues for students at different stages of the choice process. These theories can help shape our expectations and the interventions designed for students in different stages of development. For example, Chickering (1969) and Chickering and Reisser (1993) in their landmark work on college student development identify seven vectors or developmental tasks that become the focus of college students' concerns and attention at various points in their college years. Chickering argues that vocational concerns are especially critical for juniors and seniors, but that we force freshmen to deal with these issues before they have developed an identity on which to base these decisions. This can explain why some students are "undecided" and can provide insights into the type of assistance we need to provide. It can be argued, for example, that many freshmen are just not ready to make educational or vocational decisions, and although there maybe exceptions to this, advisers and counselors will serve students best by assessing their primary focus and needs at a given time.

These issues also have relevance for interventions. For example, some undecided freshmen may not have made enough vocational choices to be ready for certain types of assessments. Interventions for freshmen, generally speaking, are likely to be successful if maintained at an "awareness building" level (challenging career beliefs or stereotypes). Sophomores, on the other hand, may benefit from a career course that includes self-assessment measures and strategies for exploring the world of work. Juniors and seniors are often more ready to participate in experiential programs, such as shadowing or internships. However, caution must be taken since certain assumptions from theory may not apply to every individual. Each student should be asked relevant questions to determine his or her level of readiness for different interventions.

Additionally, academic advisers are increasingly working with non-traditional college-age students. Broader theories of adult and human development theory may be more useful in understanding these students. Theories that are age-linked, however, may not be as relevant since individuals and patterns of life choices are so diverse.

The "developmental readiness" issue provides the rationale for the presentation of interventions based on the career-planning process. The *process* remains the same for all students of all ages and at all developmental stages. The life experiences and career maturity levels brought to the process will vary depending on age and developmental readiness, but the career-planning process remains the same.

Interventions Based on the Career-Planning Process

As students are taken through the various steps in the career-planning process identified earlier in this chapter, different interventions can be used to accomplish the specific goals of each step. The Appendix provides a summary and quick reference of interventions based on the career-planning process.

Steps 1 and 2 of the process involve gathering information about oneself and about the world of work. For Step 1, gathering information about oneself can be as easy as introspection, (e.g., having students think about what they like and don't like, or what's important to them in a work setting). However, a more systematic approach to self-assessment is likely to be more successful in helping students increase their insights about their strengths and limitations and may actually force them to think about issues they have not personally confronted previously. Professional assessments can be very helpful at this stage. Some examples include the *Strong Interest Inventory* (SII) to measure interests, a *Skills Checklist* to help identify abilities, the *Myers-Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI)* to provide insights about personal preferences related to the world of work, or a *Values Card Sort* to help students identify what is meaningful to them in a work setting. (These assessment tools are further described in Chapter 4.)

Career services or counseling center staffs on many campuses offer career courses (usually for credit) or workshops (usually not for credit), in which these or similar assessments are used. Additionally, many campuses have computerized guidance programs such as *DISCOVER* or *SIGI-Plus* which also provide self-assessment opportunities for students.

Advisers, in determining if self-assessment is a realistic intervention to offer students, should try to determine, through questioning, if students have considered or analyzed their skills, values, and interests and if they can articulate them. If not, it is likely they need to start at Step 1 of the career-planning process. This is especially true for students who are very undecided about choice of major and career.

Step 2 involves gathering information about the world of work. There are many written resources that will help students brainstorm career options. The *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991) describes thousands of occupations. Although this volume may seem overwhelming at first, learning its system for classifying occupations can be extremely enlightening. Other resources also "code" occupations based on some theory or system of classifying career areas. For example, the *Dictionary of Holland Occupational Codes* (Gottfredson & Holland, 1989) categorizes occupations based on Holland's theory of occupational environments and personal orientations, one of the most widely-used theories in the field. This allows students to narrow their lists of career options into a manageable form.

Most college and universities have catalogues which describe all of the majors available. Many students find this revealing as they discover majors they had not considered. Further exploration can identify career possibilities for these majors. Additionally, many colleges and universities have developed in-house directories, such as listings of job titles of alumni or listings of academic majors coded by classification systems, such as Holland's. These listings and directories are often made accessible to students through career services offices, counseling centers, libraries, and advising offices. Computerized guidance systems such as *DISCOVER* or *SIGI-Plus* offer students the opportunity to identify possible career fields based on the self-assessment sections of these programs. A great deal of up-to-date information about many facets of an occupation are also available on these systems. Printing results of these programs for further study is also an advantage of these systems.

It is very important that students be offered opportunities to process the information they collect in Steps 1 and 2. This can be accomplished in individual advising or counseling appointments. Career-planning courses which often require students to reflect upon and integrate the information they collect through various assignments and exercises are also useful. Students using computerized guidance systems should be encouraged to meet with a professional to discuss the information presented to them in the various printouts provided by the systems. Steps 3 and 4 involve analysis of the information collected previously. Information about majors and careers needs to be analyzed to determine, at a minimum, the following:

- Does the student have the skills needed to succeed in this major and/or career field?
- Is the primary work done in this field interesting to the student?
- Does the work offer the opportunity for the kind of environment in which the student's primary values can be met?

Much of the analysis of majors can be accomplished by gathering more detailed information about each alternative identified through additional reading and by talking with faculty, advisers, and others who are experts in this field of study. Students can assess their interest and chances of succeeding in a particular major by seeking information about general and major requirements and comparing past academic achievements with what is required. If students are considering programs that are selective in their admissions, they need to assess their chances realistically by examining the criteria set for acceptance.

Analysis of career alternatives also involves additional reading and talking with experts on and off campus, but experiential opportunities can provide a broader and more in-depth exposure to a particular field. Figure 2 outlines various strategies for exploring careers that help students analyze "fit" between their own personal preferences and strengths and the environment and requirements of various careers.

Informational interviewing, which involves talking with professionals in the field, can provide workers' views of how they spend their time, what they like and dislike about their work, life-style implications, and other relevant information. Many colleges and universities have developed networks of alumni who are willing to talk to students about their work experiences. Shadowing experiences, which offer students an opportunity to follow a professional for a day or more, can provide a first-

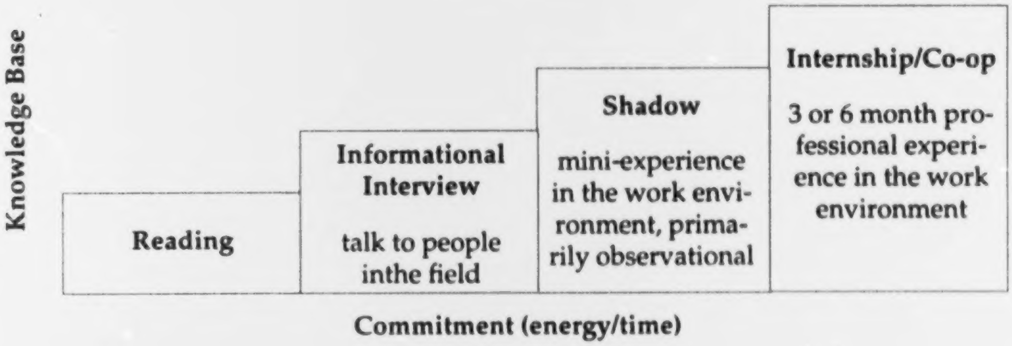
Knowledge Base
Reading
Informational Interview
talk to people inthe field
Shadow
mini-experience in the work environment, primarily observational
Internship/Co-op
3 or 6 month professional experience in the work environment
Commitment (energy/time)

Figure 2. Exploring Careers

hand view of what the job entails. Students are realistically exposed to the total work environment and the specific work tasks involved.

Ultimately, the best opportunity to "test the fit" of a given career field for students is an internship or field placement. These experiences involve full-time work for a limited period (often one school term) in which the student is expected to act as a professional in the organization. Some majors have internships or field experience built into the curriculum (e.g., student teaching). For other majors, internships or field placements are voluntary and can be paid or unpaid. As Figure 2 indicates, the level of commitment for the student increases with each of these strategies for exploring careers. At the same time, the amount of knowledge gained about a career also increases; thus students doing an internship or field placement are more likely to make better decisions leading to greater satisfaction with their chosen field. Referrals to career services offices are appropriate for students to gather more information about these strategies, but advisers can encourage students to try these experiences and help them appreciate the ultimate pay-offs during their job search later.

Having completed the steps identified above, students must be encouraged to develop an action plan, so that they continue their level of energy and focus on the decision-making process. Academic advisers can help students write a plan of action. Encouraging students to outline what actions they will take in the next month, school term, or year can help them set goals. Scheduling follow-up appointments can help them review their goals and reevaluate their decisions. One strategy is to ask students to present their goals in writing so that you can mail their goal statements back to them after a specified period of time. In this way, they are reminded of the goals they have set and can discern what they have accomplished in the time period. Action plans often include repeating Steps 2, 3, and 4 for several career options until students identify the major and the career that holds the most potential for a good fit.

Summary

This chapter outlines an approach to making decisions about majors and careers and identifies interventions that can help undecided students make satisfying choices about their future vocational direction. Helping undecided students understand the career planning process is a critical responsibility of advisers and counselors. Gathering information, analyzing alternatives, making a choice, and creating a plan of action are all steps that students need to experience. Advisers can support students at each step in specific ways.

Interventions that can be used to enhance the career search process include the use of printed materials, direct contact with workers in the field, and direct experiences in a work environment. Academic advising, counseling, and career services must work together on behalf of undecided students if they are to receive maximum assistance in becoming proficient in career planning.

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Appendix

Interventions for Career Advising Based on the Career-Planning Process

Steps in the Process	Interventions
Step One. Self-Assessment	Professional assessments, such as the Strong Interest Inventory, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the Career Briefs Inventory. Values checklists or card sorts. Skills/abilities/aptitude assessments or checklists. All these can be administered through: ◆ career counselors ◆ career exploration courses ◆ computerized guidance system such as SIGI or Discover ◆ workshops facilitated by professionals on campus
Step Two. Assessing the World of Work	Books such as the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT)* and *College Majors and Careers* by Paul Pfifer. College/university course catalogs which identify all the majors and academic programs of study at your college or university. In-house directories such as listings of alumni with job titles, or academic majors on your campus, coded by Holland theme. These are likely to be resources developed by career services or academic advising professionals on your campus.
Step Three. Analyzing Alternatives: Majors	Reading course bulletins or curriculum sheets which outline specific requirements for various majors. Talking to advisers or admissions staff in intended programs of study. Career counselors and career library resources can help identify career options for various majors. Many schools provide workshops on identifying career options in specified majors usually through career services offices.
Step Four. Analyzing Alternatives: Careers	Books such as the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* and *Improved Career Decision Making in a Changing World*. Informational interviews with professionals in the field (many schools

(Appendix continued)

	have alumni networks already developed). Shadowing for a short time with professionals in the field. Internships provide the most extensive and intensive exploration opportunities. Career counselors can provide general information but, more importantly, can help students identify library resources and people to contact.
Year in School	Intervention
Freshmen	Focus tends not to be on career-related issues; may need more individual counseling. Students are often unready to make career decisions, although Use Career Maturity assessment can be used to identify students who are mature enough to begin exploring career-related issues. May introduce concepts or challenge their thinking about careers using instruments such as the Career Beliefs Inventory (Krumboltz). Creating awareness of issues is appropriate here.
Sophomores	More ready to focus; self-awareness generally higher. Ideal time for self-assessment and career exploration. Encourage enrollment in career exploration courses or workshops that integrate self-assessment strategies with career exploration assignments. Individual counseling whereby students can take several assessments (Strong Interest Inventory, MBTI, etc.) and process the results with a career counselor. Computerized systems such as Discover or SIGI are helpful at this stage. Introduce techniques for gathering information about careers: reading and informational interviewing are helpful for sophomores to understand the world of work.
Juniors	If the student is focused, introduce more experiential concepts such as shadowing and co-ops or internships. Generally ready to develop a plan of action and to test out career options in chosen field. If still undecided or not selected into program of choice: self-esteem issues need to be addressed through individual counseling or support groups.

(Appendix continued)

	Students need to learn the career planning process to develop an initial plan of action or a "plan B." A course specifically designed for students looking for alternative careers is ideal for these students. All need lots of support.
Seniors	If the student is focused, he or she needs assistance with job search strategies, resume critique through individual counseling or workshops, interviewing assistance through workshops or mock interviews. All can be provided in courses as well. Seniors without significant work experience should be encouraged to consider internships or part-time related jobs. If still undecided, utilize strategies described above for juniors.

Chapter 6

Freshman Seminars and Other Courses for Undecided Students

Betsy O. Barefoot and Douglas N. Searcy

Of the many programs and activities designed to assist first-year students in making decisions about academic majors and careers, one of the most efficient and effective may be the freshman seminar. Recent national survey research (Barefoot & Fidler, 1993) indicates that approximately 50% of institutions that offer freshman orientation seminars include, as a course component, a focus on academic and/or career planning. This chapter will provide information about freshman seminars in American higher education and how these courses are being used to assist students in the process of making academic and career decisions. In addition, this chapter will highlight exemplary courses designed exclusively for students, in and beyond the first college year, who have not found an academic home.

The Entering College Student Views Higher Education: The Grand Ticket Punch

Ask today's typical college freshman during the first week of class why he or she is attending college, and the response is likely to be some variation on the theme, "to get a good job." Listen to the voices of typical first-year students: "I didn't want to be stuck in a small town. You just work at Wal-Mart or something." " With a high school degree, you'll be flipping burgers the rest of your life. You still may be (flipping burgers) with a college degree" (National Resource Center, 1993). Recent survey data for the nation's 1993 entering freshman class indicates that over 82% of respondents considered "the job" a very important reason in deciding to go to college (Astin, 1993).

But in spite of their interest in what many of them believe to be the ultimate payoff of a college education, most entering college students need assistance with the basics: decision making, gathering knowledge about academic major options, and learning a process to link personal strengths, values, and life-style choices to an academic major and an ultimate career. Significant numbers of first-year students, whether or not they have officially declared a major, are, in reality, undecided and may find themselves part of the 75% of students who become major-changers before graduation (Noel, 1985). Freshmen seminars, generally offered for students in the first term they are in college, can provide a structure to meet the needs and interests of new students by helping them make decisions about academic programs and occupational fields.

The Freshman Seminar in American Higher Education

Although freshman seminars as a course type exhibit a wide variety of specific topics and formats, these courses generally share the common goal of meeting the academic, personal, and social needs of entering students, whatever those needs are determined to be by the host institution. In recent research conducted by the National Resource Center for the Freshman Year Experience (Barefoot & Fidler, 1993), all regionally accredited American colleges and universities with student populations over 100 (N = 2,460) were surveyed to determine the existence of freshman seminars. Of the 1,064 responding institutions (43%), 700 or 66% of respondents now supplement the traditional first-year curriculum through a course called a "freshman seminar."

Although freshman seminars are thought by many educators to be a recent addition to the curriculum, higher education history records that the first such course was offered at Boston University over 100 years ago (Fitts & Swift, 1928). However, the popularity of freshman seminars waxed and waned throughout the 20th century and did not enjoy a significant resurgence until the 1980s, the period in which American higher education witnessed a general ground swell of interest in first-year students — their success, retention, and the quality of their academic experience.

Any attempt to define or describe the freshman seminar precisely is made difficult because of frequent use of indiscriminate terminology. In order to clarify precisely what is meant by the term "freshman seminar," the 1991 National Survey of Freshman Seminar Programming proposed and validated the following five most common seminar types.

1. *Extended Orientation Seminars.* Sometimes called freshman orientation, college survival or student success courses. May be taught by faculty, administrators, and/or student affairs professionals. Content will likely include a wide variety of student success topics, an introduction to campus resources, and current issues of campus life such as health, relationships, diversity, and safety.

2. *Academic seminars with generally uniform academic content across sections.* May be either elective or required courses, sometimes interdisciplinary or theme-oriented, sometimes part of a required general education core. Will often include academic skills components such as critical thinking and expository writing.

3. *Academic seminars on various topics.* Specific topics chosen by faculty who teach sections of these freshman seminars. Will generally be an elective course. Topics may evolve from any discipline or may include societal issues such as biological and chemical warfare, urban culture, animal research, tropical rain forests, the AIDS epidemic.

4. *Professional seminars.* Generally taught for first-year students within professional schools or specific disciplines such as engineering, health science, or education to prepare students for the demands of the major and the profession.

5. *Basic study skills seminar.* Generally offered for freshmen who are academically underprepared. These seminars focus on such basic study skills as grammar, note-taking, and time management (Barefoot, 1992).

Of these five freshman seminar types, the extended orientation and professional seminars are most likely to include a focus on academic and career decision making.

Currently, extended orientation seminars (also called "student success," "college survival," or "coping with college" courses) account for over 70% of all freshman seminars (Barefoot & Fidler, 1993). These courses attempt to cover a wide array of topics such as study skills, time management, values clarification, and an introduction to campus resources. Approximately 50% also include a focus on academic planning and career decision making. Professional seminars, which are offered on over 160 campuses nationwide and are designed for students who have already declared a major in a professional field such as engineering, have as their *primary* focus the expectations of academic major and career. These courses introduce students to the language, the epistemology, and the application of these disciplines, thereby helping students clarify (or abandon) their decision to travel these professional career paths.

The 1991 National Survey research (Barefoot & Fidler, 1993) found that freshman seminars exhibit the following structural characteristics.

- *Required/Elective.* 45% of reported courses are required for all students. An additional 27% are required for "some" students, generally students in one or more "high- risk" categories.
- *Grading.* 68% of seminars are graded by a letter grade, the remainder by pass/fail or credit/no credit.
- *Academic Credit.* Over 85% of freshman seminars carry academic credit toward graduation but the amount varies by institution. The one-semester hour course is the most common (45%), and the three-semester hour course, the next most common (19%). Approximately 6% of freshman seminars are two-semester courses.
- *Instruction.* Freshman seminars are taught primarily by faculty and student affairs professionals. However, campus administrators, trustees, alumni, graduate and upper-level students also teach such courses on many campuses. A recent trend in freshman seminar instruction is the co-teaching of seminars by faculty and upper-level students.
- *Instructor Training.* Currently 71% of institutions offer training for freshman seminar instructors, but only 47% require the training as a prerequisite for teaching the course.
- *Academic Advising.* Freshman seminar instructors are the academic advisers for seminar students in 23% of reporting institutions. For an additional 23%, freshman seminar instructors are academic advisers for some, but not all, of their seminar students.
- *Special Sections for Student Sub-Groups.* Currently, small numbers of institutions provide special freshman seminar sections for student sub-groups. The most frequently reported special sections are for adult students. Approximately 5% of reporting institutions (32) indicated that special sections of the freshman seminar are offered exclusively for undecided students.
- *Outcomes.* The most commonly measured and reported objective outcome of the freshman seminar is improved freshman-to-sophomore retention. This outcome has been validated for seminars that vary dramatically in terms of specific structural features and specific content. Fidler (1991) posits that the factor most responsible for this outcome is what he terms the "process" of the seminar course: the creation of close relationships through interactions between participating students and between the students and instructor. In his 20-year study of the impact of University 101, the freshman seminar at the University of South Carolina, Fidler maintains that without attention to the creation of a supportive group, freshman seminars may have little, if any, measurable impact on retention.

How Freshman Seminars Can Assist All New Students with Major and/or Career Decisions

The 1991 National Survey of Freshman Seminar Programming (Barefoot & Fidler, 1993) found that only a small percentage of institutions (5%) currently offer special sections of the freshman seminar designed exclusively for undecided students. Rather, it is far more common for freshman seminars to be structured to meet the needs of all students, including those who are undecided, through a combined focus on many topics including career/academic planning. Freshman seminars that have as one of their goals the facilitate of a career planning process for participating students generally include the following specific topics and activities:

- *Basic decision making.* Gathering data from a variety of sources, narrowing options, taking risks.

- *Values and lifestyle options.* Exploring personal values and the relationship of those values to life and career options.

- *Academic departments and faculty.* Learning about academic programs, requirements for admission and progression. Meeting and interviewing faculty within academic departments.

- *Academic advising.* Getting the most from an academic adviser. Learning the purpose of academic advising. Applying academic majors to careers. Working with career center professionals to understand the relationship and application of major to career. Some focusing on the value of the liberal arts as a launching pad for careers.

- *Career planning.* Using instruments such as the Strong Interest Inventory and Holland Self-Directed Search to help students understand themselves with respect to possible career options. Using computerized systems such as DISCOVER or SIGI Plus to help students identify a range of career options. Interviewing or "shadowing" individuals in certain careers.

Many exemplary freshman seminars can be cited that include a substantial academic/career planning component. Following is a brief description of two such seminars, each of which takes a different approach to providing this important information.

At the University of South Carolina, career decision making is an important component in University 101, an elective three-semester hour freshman seminar that has been offered since 1972. As a first step in the process of thinking about majors and careers, participating students complete the Strong Interest Inventory as an out-of-class activity. Each student receives a personal interpretation of the Strong Inventory in a required class visit to the University's Career Center. In addition, one other class period is dedicated to exploring the process of career planning. Instructors may use any one of a number of activities or exercises supplied by Career Center professionals to help students begin this process. Additional University 101 class sessions also address such related topics as "the purpose of higher education" (helping students to think about purposes beyond finding "the job"); academic advising (assisting students in understanding the role of the academic adviser and in being smart consumers of academic advice); and values clarification (helping students understand and clarify a personal system of values).

At Columbia College in Columbia, Missouri, all students are required to take a one-credit freshman seminar during their first semester. Students can then opt to participate in an additional one-half credit course offered in the spring entitled "Decision Making and Career Planning Seminar." In this eight-week seminar students engage in the following processes and activities:

- Examining personal values and goals through a variety of diagnostic tests and values clarification exercises

- Utilizing decision making strategies to focus on a field of career opportunities

- Matching personal values with possible career choices

- Understanding and articulating occupational implications of educational choices

- Listing resources, both print and human with which to explore career possibilities
- Understanding the significance of "developing" a resume through life experiences during college

- Compiling a career plan notebook to take from the class

- Stating professional and personal goals to achieve career opportunities.

Students who participate in this eight-week seminar are also required to interview and shadow someone in a possible career field and to attend one meeting of a club or class related to an anticipated field of endeavor.

As a structure within which to explore a variety of important issues, including decisions about major and career, freshman seminars not only provide important information but also offer a supportive, non-threatening, nonpunitive small-group environment within which all students, whether officially decided or undecided, can share hopes, fears, and dreams and begin or continue the important process of self- discovery.

For Undecided Students Only: Academic and Career Exploration Courses

The decision to offer courses or programs targeted to undecided students is undoubtedly dependent upon both the resources available to address the needs of a variety of student sub-populations and the prevailing priorities and concerns of the institution. Such courses may be limited to students in the first college year or may be open to students at any level who have remained undeclared or who are abandoning one major and are in search of another. Following are descriptions of exemplary courses offered exclusively for this student group.

At Trenton State College in New Jersey, all freshman are required to take a non-credit, pass/fail freshman seminar. "Open Option" students (Trenton's name for undecided students) are placed into special seminar sections with a maximum enrollment of 18 students per section. These sections are taught by selected faculty and staff with a demonstrated commitment to helping students. Open option sections of the freshman seminar focus primarily on the issues of advisement, academic relationships, academic planning, values, and career planning.

Hinds Community College in Raymond, Mississippi offers a one semester hour course to either first or second year students who are "having difficulty deciding on a career, or need clarification in making a career choice." The goals of this course are as follows:

- To provide structure for the career decision process;
- To provide opportunities for the student to use the resources of the career library;
- To assist the student in choosing a college major; and
- To explore career options.

Participating students take the *Strong Interest Inventory*, the *Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory*, and Holland's *Self-Directed Search* and participate in other activities designed to help them with the career choice process.

The University of Maine at Orono has a comprehensive and well-developed program for undecided students called "Academic and Career Exploration (ACE)." The centerpiece of the ACE Program is the Academic and Career Exploration Seminar, a one-credit, pass-fail seminar which offers students the opportunity to sharpen basic skills in oral and written communication and provides them essential information about appropriate academic programs.

Entering students can apply for admission to the Academic Career Exploration Program rather than to one of the baccalaureate degree colleges at the University of Maine. The ACE Program provides academically strong, undecided students the opportunity to assess their abilities, interests, and goals while systematically investigating the University's baccalaureate degree programs. Through the special seminars and close contact with faculty advisers that characterize the program, ACE students engage in structured activities which enable them to make informed choices of major and consider potential careers. Students may continue in the ACE program until they are confident that they have identified an academic program that matches their abilities and intellectual or career interests.

The Ohio State University has one of the oldest and most well-established programs for undecided students in the country. The centerpiece of the program is "University Survey," a one-credit hour, graded course. Although all entering first-year students are required to take the course, a special version has been designed to meet the needs of the General Baccalaureate Curriculum students (Ohio State's name for undecided students). The course focuses on helping exploratory students gather important information about themselves, academic majors, and occupational relationships. Undecided students engage in self-assessment activities to determine their interests, abilities and values. They are exposed to the wide range of academic programs at the University through classes in which experts discuss the academic requirements and other important information about the majors in which the students may have an interest. They examine possible majors within the context of the personal information they have gathered and also learn of possible occupational relationships to these majors through various class activities and assignments.

The *Career Decision Making System* (CDM) (Harrington-O'Shea) is used in the class and other important materials have been gathered into a booklet which the students purchase for the class. These materials help the undecided students make connections between what they have learned about themselves with the Ohio State majors they have identified as possibilities. Since their assigned academic adviser is the instructor for the course, students can continue to explore with their adviser after the course is completed, using essential information gathered through the course as a foundation for continued exploratory activities. Another course designed especially for undecided upperclass students who are in the process of changing majors is described in Chapter 8.

Bradley University's Academic Exploration Program's seminar course (AEP 100) is designed to address the needs of first-year students who have not chosen majors. Since undecided students do not constitute a monolithic group, various class formats are offered. Some students seek course sections that provide a wide range of career information in a traditional classroom atmosphere that integrates discussion and lectures. Specific sections for each academic college (e.g., Business, Communication and Fine Arts, Education, Engineering) are also available for students who have an interest in an area but want more information before selecting a particular major in that discipline. Other students choose an "independent study" section whereby they work individually with an AEP instructor.

The primary goal of "AEP 100: Student Planning Seminar" is to help students identify their interests, values, personality style, and abilities in conjunction with compatible majors and careers. Consequently, an individualized testing process is an important component of the course and is consistently rated by students as the most valuable element in AEP 100. Inventories are initially administered in class; instructors then meet one-to-one with students to interpret the tests and discuss implications of the results. In addition to discussions on decision making, information about majors and careers is disseminated in class, speakers visit to talk about their professions, and a newsletter with advisement and career information is periodically provided. Students also learn methods and tools to pursue their own career research.

Common Features in Model Programs

Current pressures on American campuses to "declare early" often force first-year students to put the proverbial cart before the horse by choosing an academic major before they have gathered essential information about themselves and available courses of study. Many factors have converged to create this pressure, but certainly two primary factors are (a) the growing concern about high attrition rates on many American campuses, and (b) the widespread belief that undecided freshmen are at greater risk for early attrition. In actuality, research exists both to *support* (Beal & Noel, 1980; Daubman & Johnson, 1982; Rice, 1983) and *refute* (Astin, Green, & Korn, 1987; Lewallen, 1993) this link.

But whatever the motivating factor, institutions are well advised to assist first-year students with learning a process to link their personal strengths and values to an academic program and future career plan. It is perhaps unwise to assume that "decided" first-year students have been able to gather and process sufficient information to feel confident that they have made the right decision about an academic direction. Small sample research conducted by the University of South Carolina with students taking University 101 found that the vast majority of "declared" students had minimal confidence in their initial choice of major (National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience, 1993). This finding argues for the presentation of academic/career planning strategies to all first-year students whether declared or undeclared.

Additionally, first-year students who are admittedly undecided can benefit from a more intensive focus on academic and career planning through comprehensive programs that include a seminar course and a strong system of academic advising. The small number of such programs that can actually be identified on American campuses may be an indication not of sufficient concern, but of insufficient fiscal and human resources.

Freshman seminars are dynamic, evolving courses which have been meeting the needs of generations of new students for over 100 years. The offering by a college or university of a freshman seminar which includes a strong focus on academic and career planning is an indication of that institution's willingness to accept a major share of the responsibility for the success of new students, in and beyond the college experience. For entering students, we as educators should do no less.

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The authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the individuals who contributed information for this chapter:

Anne Gormley, Trenton State University, New Jersey

Dana Birnbaum, University of Maine, Orono

Clair Thomas, Hinds Community College, Raymond, Mississippi

Elaine Grev, Columbia College, Columbia Missouri

George Steele, The Ohio State University, Columbus

Ray Zarvell, Bradley University

Chapter 7

Advising Special Groups Within the Undecided Student Population

J. D. Beatty

One may legitimately ask whether any population could be considered "regular" undecided students as opposed to "special" undecided students, but few would question the need to develop programs to enhance the likelihood of the undecided student's opportunity to succeed (Gordon, 1984). No one would question the importance of being made to feel special.

How does a special population originate? Often, "special" populations exist on many campuses in name only. The following definitions of "special" are from the *American Heritage Dictionary:* "surpassing what is common . . . exceptional . . . distinct among others of a kind . . . having a limited or special function . . . arranged for a particular purpose . . . esteemed." Does the following sample list of special undecided populations fit the above definitions: academically at-risk students, adult learners, athletes, disabled students, high-ability students, minority students, and transfer students?

One might say that "distinct among others of a kind" is a plausible definition, yet these student groups share many similarities. Undecided students share the same desire to learn as decided students for an equally wide variety of reasons; they fear failure, as do we all; they seek identity, both personal and professional; and, they each have the capacity to contribute to the human community. To paraphrase Joseph Conrad's character Lord Jim, "They are one of us."

Much has been written about undecided students—their significance to campus financial stability, their lack of persistence to degree, their level of undecidedness, and their increasing numbers (Gordon, 1984). Suggestions for assisting them "to decide" have appeared in advising and student personnel journals as well as in paper sessions at professional association meetings. This chapter will focus upon observations and suggestions concerning a few Continuous Quality Improvement tools and their application to special undecided populations.

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), Total Quality Management (TQM), and Total Quality Leadership (TQL) are some of the titles used to describe the quality movement. The roots of CQI can be traced to the early 20th century and Frederick Taylor, but the most successful applications are associated with the work of Deming (1982), Juran (1989), and Crosby (1979). Quality tenets include acceptance of change as a means to achieve security, focus upon process rather than people when seeking the causes of problems, employee involvement, customer-driven focus, decisions based upon data rather than intuition, systematic approaches to analysis and problem-solving, commitment to continuous *incremental* improvement, commitment from top management.

Quality improvement organizations strive to exceed the expectations of their customers;

eliminate unnecessary steps in processes, emphasize planning before acting (doing things right the first time); pride themselves on being open and honest; empower their employees; create self-directed work-teams to discover organization strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; see CQI as a permanent solution, a way of life rather than a quick fix or fad.

The approach assumes a commitment to lifelong learning and continuous improvement on the part of the academic adviser as well as the hope that a quality adviser-advisee relationship will facilitate the transfer of those adviser values to the advisee. The adviser and advisee must strive to work as a team.

The defining criteria of a *quality* adviser-advisee relationship are based upon two sets of assumptions. First, academic advising

- has measurable impact upon students;
- must be recognized within the institution;
- must have well-articulated goals;
- contains components that can be isolated for the purposes of research, improvement and evaluation;
- must be research based to discover new advising methods and to improve continuously;
- must be coordinated centrally to prevent fragmentation and to maintain excellence.

Second, academic advisers' roles fit into a hierarchy. The adviser is constantly battling to move the advising relationship forward on what we can conceptualize as a process comprised of the following six levels.

Level One: Curator of forms and signatory

Level Two: Disseminator of accurate course and academic program information

Level Three: Institutional interpreter; boundary spanner; educator

Level Four: Skill builder for both emotional capacity and rational capacity

Level Five: Basic and applied researcher; scholar

Level Six: Developer of human beings whose perspectives on a quality of life include dedication to lifelong learning, capacity to cope with change, and commitment to critical thinking and curiosity.

Every academic adviser must find a way to create an advising relationship that functions at the higher levels rather than being consumed with level-one issues.

Academic advising for special populations of undecided students must first succeed in making the adviser-advisee relationship special before expecting student success. That relationship must surpass what is common; it must exhibit mutual esteem. It must embrace/celebrate the interdependence of learning and learners (Covey, 1989). How do we get there from where we are?

Each academic adviser needs to develop a personal, principled vision within the parameters of the institution's mission. Advisers also can become significant change agents when they build quality advising relationships. Criteria for such a relationship are outlined below:

1. *Trust.* The adviser and advisee should assume nothing. Fact must be separated from fiction or stereotyping. The special population student is at great risk of being stereotyped.
2. *Respect.* There must be respect for human uniqueness, whether cultural, ethnic or racial. The adviser must learn and understand the cultural, ethnic or racial, and physical circumstances of his or her advisees, and the adviser must help each spe-

cial population student learn and understand the institution's expectations for cultural, ethnic, and racial acceptance.

3. *Responsibility.* The adviser and advisee must agree upon personal responsibility. Who is responsible for what? The advisee must accept ownership for his or her educational plan as well as the necessity to make the plan a success. The adviser is responsible for assistance with feasibility checks, guidance on program requirements and options, assessing results of the advisee's potential decisions, and appropriate referrals to additional campus resources.

4. *Data.* The adviser must understand the special population student within the context of that student's group; but even more importantly, the adviser must understand the advisee as an individual who by definition is special as well as a member of a special group. Some useful data for an initial assessment could include

   - values, interests, aptitude as related to career opportunities and personal circumstances;
   - "at-risk" personal characteristics;
   - special academic and non-academic barriers;
   - motivation level, advisee expectations of the institution (feasibility to deliver);
   - advisee flexibility;
   - feasibility of the timetable to complete the educational plan.

5. *Mentoring/Coaching.* The adviser is most likely to succeed with special population students when he or she is a conscientious mentor/coach and has a campus-wide commitment from colleagues to assist as well.

6. *Prevention vs. Detection Philosophy.* The adviser should help the advisee develop planning strategies that focus upon continuous improvement/enhancement within the context of the advisee's circumstances and those of the institution. Waiting to act until a problem is detected wastes enormous emotional, intellectual, and economic effort on the part of both the advisee, the adviser, and the institution.

The most successful academic advising relationships include all of the above criteria and work with decided as well as undecided students, but specific applications for some special populations of undecided students will illustrate the point. On most American campuses, the major special populations within the undecided student population are academically at-risk students, adult learners, athletes, high-ability students, disabled students, and transfer students. The remainder of this chapter will suggest how both the characteristics of a quality advising relationship (focusing upon the individual within the special undecided population) and specific Continuous Quality Improvement tools can be applied to advising strategies to assist the advisee.

Academically At-Risk Students

The academically at-risk student can be placed on a continuum ranging from "I have no problems; things will come together by the end of the term" model to the "I've never been able to do anything right; I knew this would happen" model. The first model illustrates the advisee who denies any responsibility for academic difficulty and blames others, while the second model shows that advisee as the constant victim doomed to fail. Building an adviser-advisee relationship based upon the previously-listed six criteria for success will be an enormous advising challenge.

A quality tool selection to assist this advisee is the fishbone/cause-effect diagram, since discovering the cause of an at-risk characteristic is essential to designing strategies for future success. In Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) language, the fishbone diagram seeks root causes rather than stopping with surface issues or symptoms. It requires the investigator to ask "why" at five levels prior to moving ahead. The sample fishbone diagram shown in Figure 1 (Brassard, Ritter, McManus, Collett, Love-Goodnight, & Tucker, 1992) suggests four areas that can be barriers for any student but may be particularly revealing for the academically at-risk undecided student with a high likelihood of dropping out of school.

By doing the fishbone exercise, some students will find that there are, in fact, root causes for failure and that those causes can be isolated, addressed, and either eliminated or controlled. This discovery may be very helpful to the student who in the past has come to accept the judgment that he or she just cannot learn, is not in control, or cannot ever be more than a marginal student. The advisee-adviser team, both assessing implications from the exercise, should be able to develop a long-term success strategy that leads to graduation rather than attrition. Students also can use the same tool to seek the root causes for creating excellent academic performance.

Tips to assist the academically at-risk undecided student include the following:

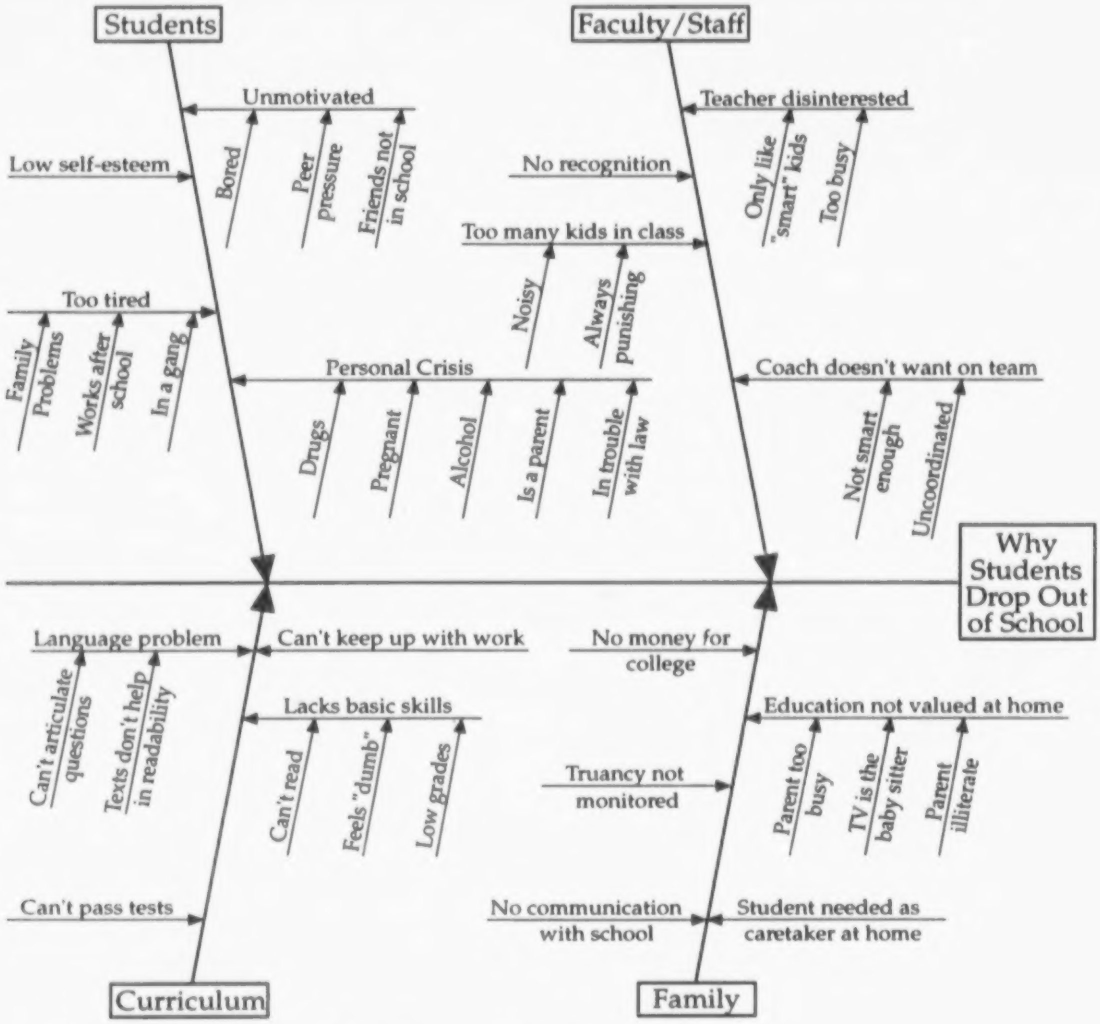
Students
Unmotivated
Bored
Peer pressure
Friends not in school
Low self-esteem
Too tired
Family Problems
Works after school
In a gang
Personal Crisis
Drugs
Pregnant
Alcohol
Is a parent
In trouble with law
Faculty/Staff
Teacher disinterested
Only like "smart" kids
Too busy
No recognition
Too many kids in class
Noisy
Always punishing
Coach doesn't want on team
Not smart enough
Uncoordinated
Why Students Drop Out of School
Language problem
Can't articulate questions
Texts don't help in readability
Can't keep up with work
Lacks basic skills
Can't read
Feels "dumb"
Low grades
Can't pass tests
Curriculum
No money for college
Education not valued at home
Parent too busy
TV is the baby sitter
Parent illiterate
Truancy not monitored
No communication with school
Student needed as caretaker at home
Family

Figure 1. Why Students Drop Out of School: Fishbone Diagram

- Guard against damaging the student's self-esteem; search for opportunity.
- Come to an adviser-advisee agreement upon the major causes of "risk;" seek solutions.
- Be prepared to deal with the *grief* from a lost first-career choice. Students may need assistance similar to that provided by counselors working with someone who has lost a loved one.

Adult Students

On many campuses adult students are the fastest growing student population. Some literature has addressed the focused nature, intense level of motivation, and delight in the classroom exhibited by older students (Graham, 1987). Stephen Brookfield, however, has proposed an alternative scenario in which the adult student may view himself or herself as an "impostor," fearing cultural suicide and loss of community during the campus experience (Brookfield, 1993). Examples of both these scenarios and many additional situations concerning adult learners are played out on campuses everywhere (Richter & Witten, 1984). The adviser-advisee relationship must evolve on the basis of mutual trust and respect, a clear definition and acceptance of personal and institutional responsibilities, data on individual student, coaching, and a preventive medicine/wellness mindset.

Asking the adult learner to map out a plan is a good place to begin, but the plan can be enriched by using Continuous Quality Improvement tools. The following are good places to begin:

- Personal vision statement
- SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats analysis)
- Process analysis (one model is illustrated in Figure 2).

Asking the undecided adult learner to develop a personal vision, if she or he does not already have one, will help the advisee and adviser explore opportunities to match personal goals with institutional programs and services. Obviously, the tool can be used with any student, but the undecided adult student may possess a sense of urgency about education that other special populations do not, thus making the personal vision statement particularly helpful (Schlossberg, 1984).

The SWOT analysis places academic and nonacademic issues on the table. It acknowledges the advisee's total environment. With a vision

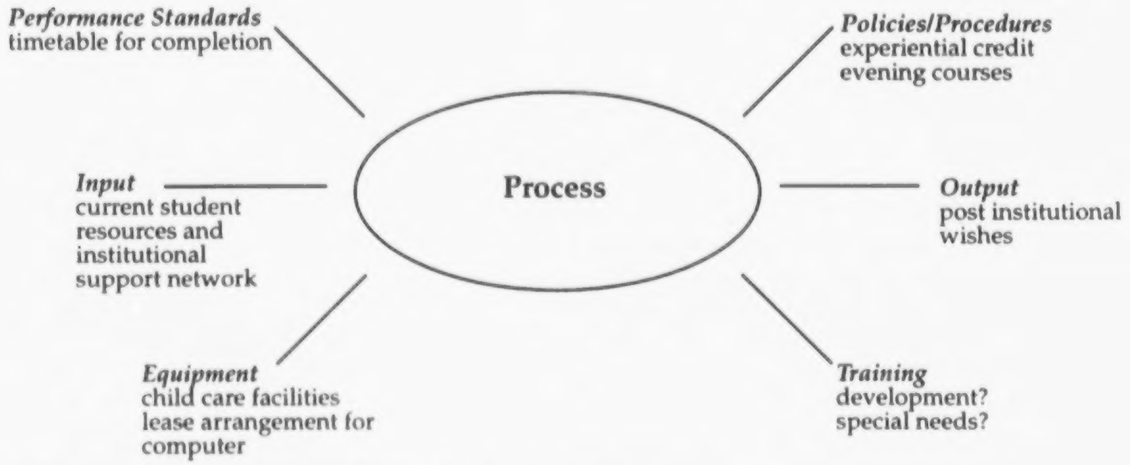
Performance Standards
timetable for completion
Policies/Procedures
experiential credit
evening courses
Input
current student
resources and
institutional
support network
Process
Output
post institutional
wishes
Equipment
child care facilities
lease arrangement for
computer
Training
development?
special needs?

Figure 2. Process Analysis to Obtain Graduation Wishes

and an environmental assessment, the advisee should be ready to put things in motion, to look at the dynamics and multiplicity of the situation, and to take responsibility for the process. As the coach and member of the institutional team the student has joined, the academic adviser is instrumental in assisting, measuring and monitoring the progress to the advisee's educational goal. The diagram in Figure 2 illustrates one example of a process model and suggests some examples of each major aspect of the process.

Many adult students already may be familiar with concepts of Continuous Quality Improvement from their employment, or they may find the focus upon process to be therapeutic in their world of ever-increasing chaos, especially as they anticipate setting foot on a college campus with its unique and unfamiliar ambiance. Yet the point still remains: each adult student will be different, so the academic adviser must rely on agreed-upon data and interpretation of those data, not on stereotypical assumptions about adult learners.

Tips to assist the undecided adult student include the following:

- Strive to insure that the advisee has considered every feasible option so that precious time will not be wasted.
- Explain the *process* for completing the degree, certification, etc. The adult student may not understand or have the patience with educational bureaucracy.
- Point out experiential strengths.

Student Athletes

Student athletes often enroll at the university with the most effective athletic recruiting program. In a few cases, the recruiting program may or may not be based upon the academic programs or the necessity or feasibility to earn a degree (Whitner & Myers, 1986). In the glamour sports, men's football and basketball, the prospect of a multi-million dollar professional career can cloud a student-athlete's judgment about choosing the ideal academic setting rather than the ideal athletic setting. Certainly at the Division I level, enormous pressure is placed upon winning, bowl/tournament success, alumni and fan expectations, and revenue.

The student athlete has nearly a full-time job—maybe more than a full-time job—during her or his season of competition. Practice, analyzing films, studying opponent tendencies, travel, etc. can occupy many hours per week. Given the NCAA 12-credit minimum course load and progress toward degree requirements, school related activities occupy the equivalent of a 36-hour-work week. In addition, the progress toward degree requirements are a special challenge to the undecided student athlete. What courses count toward the general education requirements? What courses count toward a potential major or minor? What courses count as electives? Obviously, these questions must be answered for each individual student.

To compound the student athlete's dilemma of balancing athletics, academics, and NCAA compliance requirements is physical exhaustion, emotional stress, and the often extraneous demands and expectations attached to high profile sports activities. In some sports, the likelihood that the student athlete may also be a minority student can compound the challenge (Underwood, 1986).

When the academic adviser begins to build a relationship with the advisee, the coaching staff and athletic counselors are also building relationships with that advisee. The goals of coaches, athletic counselors, and the academic adviser may be inconsistent. Even when their goals are in agreement, there may be disagreement on the role of individual decision making, collaboration versus authority, individual needs versus team needs, etc. The academic adviser often has an uphill battle, because the other two units likely have more contact and significantly more influence over the athlete than the academic adviser (Frost, 1991).

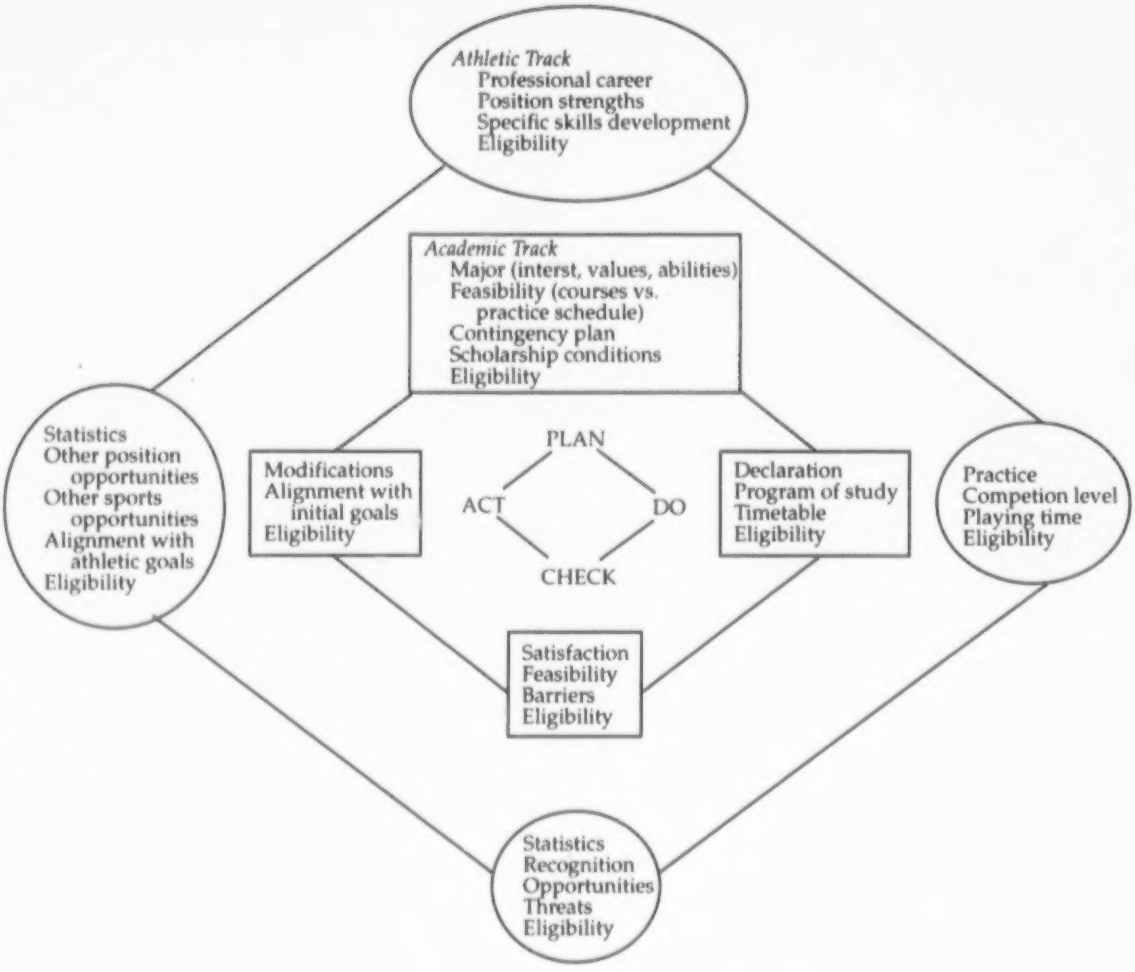
Athletic Track
Professional career
Position strengths
Specific skills development
Eligibility
Academic Track
Major (interst, values, abilities)
Feasibility (courses vs. practice schedule)
Contingency plan
Scholarship conditions
Eligibility
Statistics
Other position opportunities
Other sports opportunities
Alignment with athletic goals
Eligibility
Modifications
Alignment with initial goals
Eligibility
PLAN
ACT
DO
CHECK
Declaration
Program of study
Timetable
Eligibility
Practice
Competion level
Playing time
Eligibility
Satisfaction
Feasibility
Barriers
Eligibility
Statistics
Recognition
Opportunities
Threats
Eligibility

Figure 3. Academic–Athletic Success Process Planning: Shewhart Cycle

Some tools of CQI that work well with student athletes fit nicely into the typical activities of team scouting reports, bench coaching, and game adjustments. A strong adviser-advisee relationship can be built by advising student athletes (a) to develop an academic game plan, (b) to build a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) assessment, and (c) to implement the Shewhart Cycle thought process (Plan-Do-Check-Act) (see Shewhart, 1931, 1939). A set of railroad tracks is one way to visualize the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle for student athletes. The student athlete must maintain the parallel nature of his/her goals — academic and athletic. Allowing either to function without the other will result in derailment. The Shewhart Cycle in Figure 3 for a student athlete illustrates how, at each point in the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle, the student's athletic and academic goals must work in tandem. The mentor-coaching role is a challenge for advisers to achieve, but with support from athletic counselors and the coaching staff, it is achievable. After all, everyone is on the same institutional team, and few can argue with a win/win record!

Academic advisers must understand eligibility requirements, potentially differential admissions requirements, and the challenges associated with them, and the special alumni and "friends of the university" whose influence may or may not be in an individual student athlete's best interests. Self-esteem (jock versus student athlete), loss of starting position, and media pressures are all challenges to building a successful adviser-advisee relationship. On the other hand, there are advising opportunities that can build trust and help develop a game plan for life.

Tips to assist the undecided student athlete:

- Help the advisee build a "game plan."
- Using athletic metaphors and coaching behaviors may work.
- Ask the student athlete to develop a reality base that balances academics and athletics and careers.
- The term *eligibility* may be an excellent starting point for future discussions about academic and career options.

High-Ability Students

High-ability students are enrolling in post-secondary institutions as they always have, but the variety within this group has grown in recent years (Jenkins-Friedman, 1986). In the past, such students entered honors programs, normally enjoyed a wider set of academic choices than their peers, and graduated with honors. Now program opportunities for high-ability students have expanded even further (Day, 1989). They may be participating in college programs for gifted and talented students while in middle school and high school; they may be post-secondary enrollment students; they may be full-time "early admits" whose academic talent makes a high school diploma unnecessary.

Since some of these students will be minors and just entering their teen years, the academic adviser assumes, by default, some parental characteristics, thus adding pluses and minuses to the formula for building the successful adviser-advisee relationship. The institution must provide similar surrogate parental support for the minor student, since some legal responsibility goes with admission. High-ability undecided students can pursue nearly any career successfully, so the process of sorting, weighing, pondering, and reconsidering is enormous. These students are natural subjects for the "Plan-Do-Check-Act" quality cycle as well as for flow charting their educational program. The advising challenge is to encourage deliberation, not impulsiveness. These students also are prime candidates for mentoring/coaching activities.

Undecided honor students do not fit stereotypes any better than other special undecided populations. Gordon (1983, 1984) found them to be less decided than other undecided students, less certain about options and more uncomfortable during their first term in college, even though they performed better academically.

Working with gifted and talented students in pre-enrollment, orientation, or first-year activities and using the flow-chart not only sharpens decision-making and problem-solving skills but also helps these students develop the skills to anticipate change *before* the change occurs. Figure 4 illustrates how the flow chart quality tool can assist the high-ability undecided advisee and his or her adviser to develop a plan by analyzing decision points. Decision points are illustrated by the diamond symbol. The flow chart tool asks the planner to consider key decision points, wait time, and loops (separate paths that can take the process ahead or back). Flow charting should assist the planner to anticipate bottlenecks as well as eliminate duplication and unnecessary effort. Because so many choices and possible routes to goals can be incorporated in flow charting, this exercise stimulates the gifted student's talents.

With such a large range of possibilities, the advisee-adviser relationship can flourish and true collaboration can thrive. Keeping options open as long as the high-ability student wishes is the key. The student can learn to control

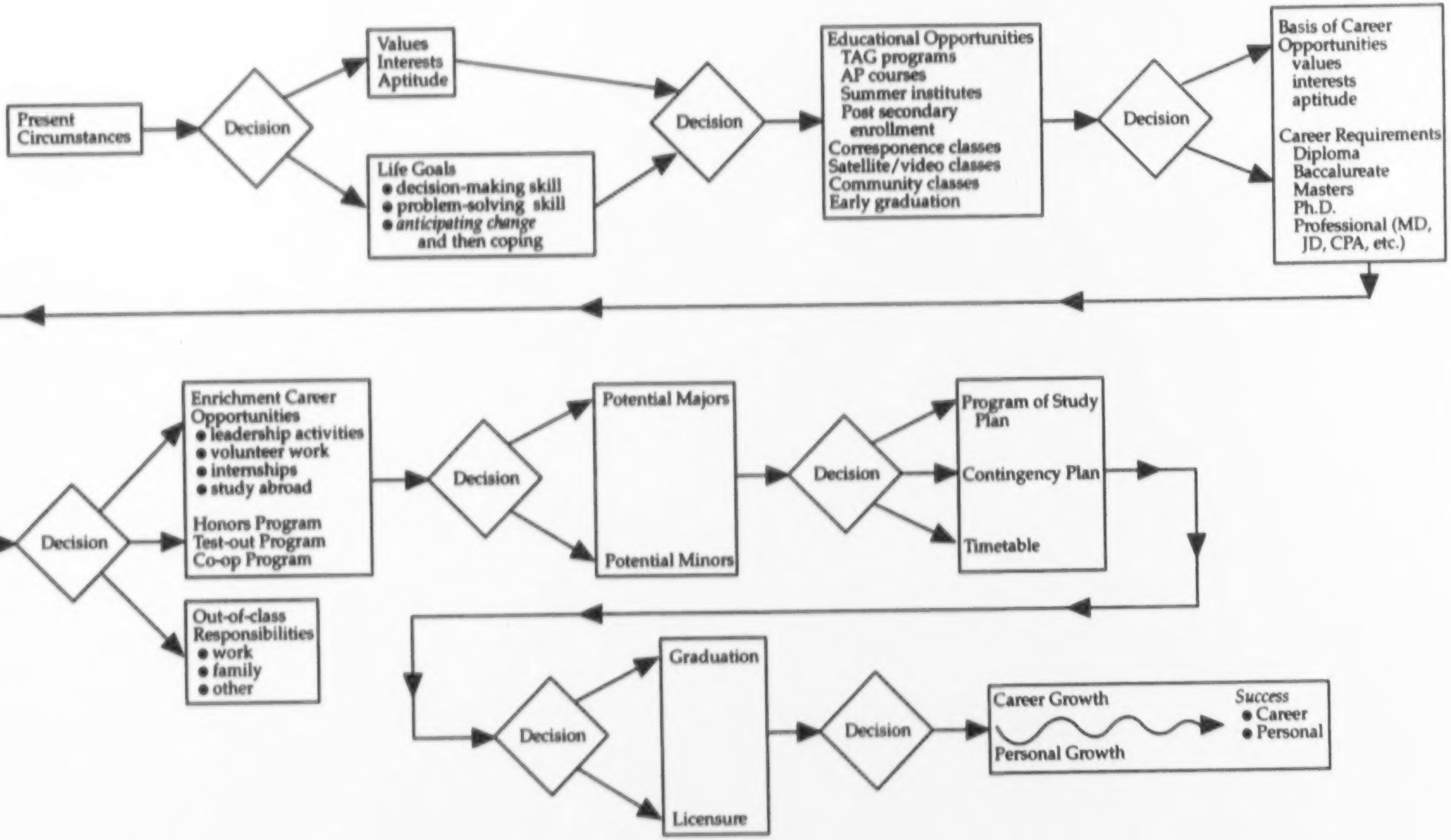
Present Circumstances
Decision
Values
Interests
Aptitude
Life Goals
● decision-making skill
● problem-solving skill
● *anticipating change* and then coping
Decision
Educational Opportunities
TAG programs
AP courses
Summer institutes
Post secondary enrollment
Corresponence classes
Satellite/video classes
Community classes
Early graduation
Decision
Basis of Career Opportunities
values
interests
aptitude
Career Requirements
Diploma
Baccalureate
Masters
Ph.D.
Professional (MD, JD, CPA, etc.)
Decision
Enrichment Career Opportunities
● leadership activities
● volunteer work
● internships
● study abroad
Honors Program
Test-out Program
Co-op Program
Out-of-class Responsibilities
● work
● family
● other
Decision
Potential Majors
Potential Minors
Decision
Program of Study Plan
Contingency Plan
Timetable
Decision
Graduation
Licensure
Decision
Career Growth
Personal Growth
Success
● Career
● Personal

Figure 4. Key Decision Points in Developing an Academic and Personal Plan for Success

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decision points rather than be controlled by them by using good planning skills. Flow charting also can be a valuable tool for the academically at-risk student for the same reason, since at times the "risk" is caused by weak skills in controlling decision points. Developing strong decision-making skills for all advisees should be every academic advisers' goal.

Tips to assist the high-ability undecided student include the following:

- Challenge them. Boredom can be lethal!
- Help them focus and prioritize. Too many opportunities can cause paralysis.
- Be aware of the possibility of their fear of failure (or even fear of success).

Minority Students

Minority students face barriers because of their minority status. In the past, and on some campuses currently, minority students were admitted on criteria different from those of their majority peers. (A similar situation can occur with student athletes whether they are minority or majority.) These perceived or real differences often lead to problems. In many instances differences were and are *perceived* only, but perception often equals reality. Whether admissions criteria are identical or differentiated, the advisee-adviser relationship is at risk initially because most minority students find themselves, possibly for the first time, in a truly minority environment without a clear understanding of how to function in it. Minority students often have gone to schools where they were either the majority or a nearly equal minority among minorities. The move to a university campus creates a host of barriers for all students, but minority students face unique barriers because of their minority status.

Edward Anderson's (1985) force field diagram (Figure 5) is an excellent starting point in un-

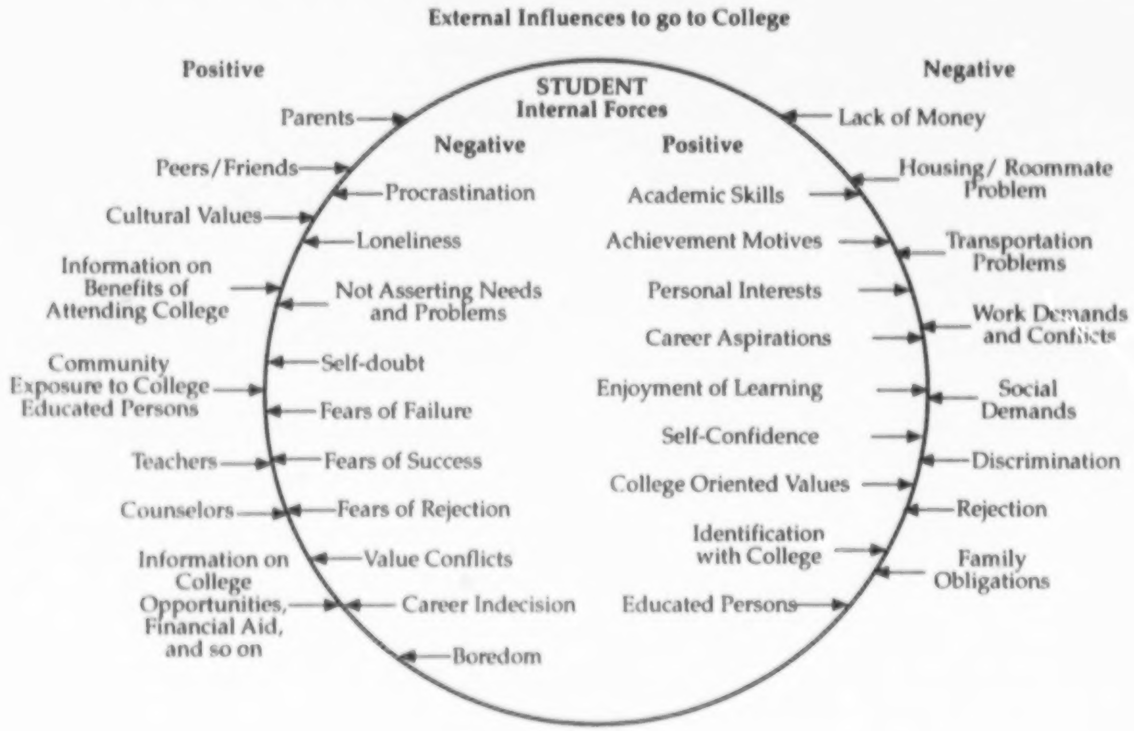
External Influences to go to College
Positive
Negative
STUDENT
Internal Forces
Negative
Positive
Parents
Peers/Friends
Cultural Values
Information on Benefits of Attending College
Community Exposure to College Educated Persons
Teachers
Counselors
Information on College Opportunities, Financial Aid, and so on
Procrastination
Loneliness
Not Asserting Needs and Problems
Self-doubt
Fears of Failure
Fears of Success
Fears of Rejection
Value Conflicts
Career Indecision
Boredom
Academic Skills
Achievement Motives
Personal Interests
Career Aspirations
Enjoyment of Learning
Self-Confidence
College Oriented Values
Identification with College
Educated Persons
Lack of Money
Housing/ Roommate Problem
Transportation Problems
Work Demands and Conflicts
Social Demands
Discrimination
Rejection
Family Obligations

Figure 5. Force Field Analysis of College Persistence

derstanding the range of barriers to academic success that all students face.

In addition, Jacqueline Fleming (1993) proposes four developmental qualities essential to minority students' success in college: leadership, competence, mentorship, and climate (coping with threatening situations). The academic adviser must address all four qualities in building a positive academic and personal relationship with the minority advisee. As with all undecided students the adviser should avoid hasty and unsubstantiated conclusions.

George Jackson (1984) proposes the following protocol for advising minority students:

1. Avoid drawing conclusions about a students' ability until a complete assessment of his or her records has been made.
2. When possible, ascertain whether or not the student is a first-generation college student. This may give you some insight as to the types and kinds of conversation the student may have listened to while contemplating college.
3. When assisting with scheduling, make an attempt to put together the best schedule possible—one that maximizes the student's talents and minimizes his or her limitations. It is important that the first schedule builds confidence in the student's ability to do college work.
4. Use all available information resources—high school rank, SAT and ACT scores, high school performance (GPA), and courses taken—when assisting with scheduling.
5. Try to determine reasons for poor academic performance (if any) and direct the student to appropriate support services.
6. Have the student contact referral resources in your presence.
7. Since most minority students are highly career oriented, be as knowledgeable as possible about career opportunities and job outlook for various majors.
8. Encourage the student to consider and develop career alternatives when appropriate.
9. Evaluate very closely student productivity in math and English. If records show gross limitations, place the students in skill development courses or have them tested for more definitive information.
10. After studying the student's records, try to determine how the use of this information can enhance the student's growth and development.
11. Establish rapport by remembering personal information about the student.
12. Keep in frequent contact with the student; take the initiative, do not always wait for the student to come to you.
13. Monitor the student's progress frequently.
14. Refer the student to the Office of Minority Student Affairs if he or she needs help above or beyond your resources or ability to provide (i.e., financial, tutorial, personal, etc.).
15. Try to determine if high school grades are consistent with test scores.
16. Try to determine if academic ability is supportive of the student's educational plans.
17. Help the student gain the confidence needed to take responsibility for her or his own life.
18. Remember: the minority student has met the entrance and eligibility requirements of your university.
19. Encourage the student to talk with his/her instructors early in the term.
20. Believe in the student's ability to do the work. She or he will perform as expected!

The cause-effect quality tool works well in getting minority students to assess personal barriers, and the SWOT process assists the student to develop a plan or map for future success and to measure campus climate. As an example of assessing causes for non-persistence, a critical issue involving minority students in higher education, the cause-effect diagram used with academically at-risk students earlier in this chapter (Figure 1) illustrates a general application but can easily be used for a specific advisee.

The academic adviser *must* prevent stereotyping from influencing his or her academic advising behavior. Prior to drawing conclusions about distinctions in success or failures for specific minority populations, data (academic and climate) must be extensively collected, assessed, and interpreted. Academic advisers are advising *individuals* not ethnic or racial groups. Sensitivity on this point and respect for individual uniqueness is probably more important to building successful adviser-advisee relationships with minority students than other undecided student populations. As with any student, the cause-effect tool may be used to explore academic excellence as well as barriers. Special attention should be paid to mentoring/coaching opportunities, since many success stories concerning minority students argue that mentoring is the key (Culotta & Gibbons, 1992).

Tips to assist undecided minority students:

- Work especially hard to build trust if the adviser is white and the advisee is a person of color. Trust is essential.
- Build agreement upon what, if any, barriers to success may exist. Aggressively seek solutions.
- Hold high expectations and capitalize upon opportunities.

Transfer Students

Transfer students may or may not have developed a plan to transfer to their eventual receiving institution. When they have developed such a plan, articulation agreements, two-plus-two programs, course-by-course equivalencies, etc., often exist, and the logistics can be quite smooth. When students make the transfer without the benefit of careful long-term planning, problems may arise (Bender, 1990).

In many ways the undecided transfer student is like the new undecided freshman. Entering a new environment with new expectations, new protocol, new resource people, and new services requires coping strategies, and coping strategies involve contingency planning. The transfer student needs to understand as quickly as possible the following information:

- How have my credits transferred?
- How many and which specific courses remain in my major and/or minor?
- What specific general graduation requirements, if any, remain?
- When can I expect to graduate?

Ideally, the answers to these questions will be determined prior to the transfer and serve as main determining factors in transferring to the new institution. Unfortunately, many transfers do not proceed in this manner.

The undecided transfer student must depend upon the academic adviser to serve as a guide to the new institutional territory. The adviser might suggest that the student use one significant quality improvement tool—the flow chart, illustrated earlier in the chapter (Figure 4). As in any flow chart application, decision points, loops, divergent and convergent paths must be considered. Linking the advisee to the institution's support system is critical, and timing is as critical since many students plan to graduate within a designated time.

The junior transfer student, for example, should consider all remaining registration opportunities, since some upper-division courses are taught only once a year or in alternate years. Losing a course registration opportunity can weaken a degree, so the adviser should take the lead in asking probing questions and assisting the transfer student to enter the institution at freeway speed.

Another quality tool that may assist undecided transfer students to plan systematically is the process model illustrated earlier in the adult student section of the chapter (Figure 2). The transfer student has clearly defined input (current transfer credits) and desired outcome (degree). The performance standards, institutional policies, equipment, and training then become the areas to be worked out by the student and the academic adviser in a manner to maximize student satisfaction and achievement within the parameters of the institution's requirements for graduation.

Tips to assist undecided transfer students:

- Explain, in detail, the processes of the transfer institution. The transfer student is now in the proverbial "Rome" and must "do as the Romans do."
- Immediately resolve any transfer credit questions.
- Explain how the undecided student's transfer credits can apply to the various majors she or he is tentatively considering.
- Prioritize goals and agree upon time tables.

Disabled Students

Disabled students bring proven determination and success to higher education, but higher education personnel may not be fully ready or sufficiently informed of their responsibilities to these students (Schmidt & Sprandel, 1982). First, every academic adviser should be aware of the provisions contained in the Americans with Disabilities Act. The campus should have some coordination point where student needs can be identified, or if already identified, then linked to specific appropriate accommodations and services. As more knowledge is gathered concerning learning disabilities, the definition of disability will continue to be refined. The academic adviser, the faculty, and every appropriate student support unit need to work with the student to insure that the opportunity has been provided for academic and personal success.

Some students with disabilities come to campus with a clear understanding of their circumstances and their requirements. They need only be provided directions to the appropriate campus support services. On the other hand, some students must come to terms with a disability while in college (Vash, 1981). This process requires effort on the part of both advisee and adviser. Identification of some disabilities is time consuming, expensive, and feared by the student. Denial is a major barrier in this circumstance. Getting the student to the experts on campus, or off-campus in some instances, is not easy. Convincing some faculty that disability exists rather than that the student is seeking "the easy way out" can be difficult.

During the above situations, trust can be damaged and possibly destroyed. The advisee-adviser relationship is fragile (Lombana, 1989), and developing consensus on the responsibility for each academic unit and building a strong data set are extremely important. The campus coordinator for disabled students is the adviser's best resource for building a strong relationship with the disabled advisee and implementing a prevention versus detection philosophy.

The quality tool often effective for these circumstances is the cause-effect analysis. Earlier in the chapter the cause-effect tool was used to illustrate how students, faculty/staff, curriculum and family can be used to assess problems (Figure 1). The process can be reversed to assess how other categories of causes can be explored to produce the effect of student success and satisfaction. For example, the advisee, adviser, and coordinator for disabled student services might develop an analysis similar to that in Figure 6.

Tips to assist undecided disabled students:

- Make certain the advisee knows what can be done, where it can be done, and who can do it. Special needs should be identified and accommodated.
- Forge a partnership for academic and personal success. Build a trusting relationship.

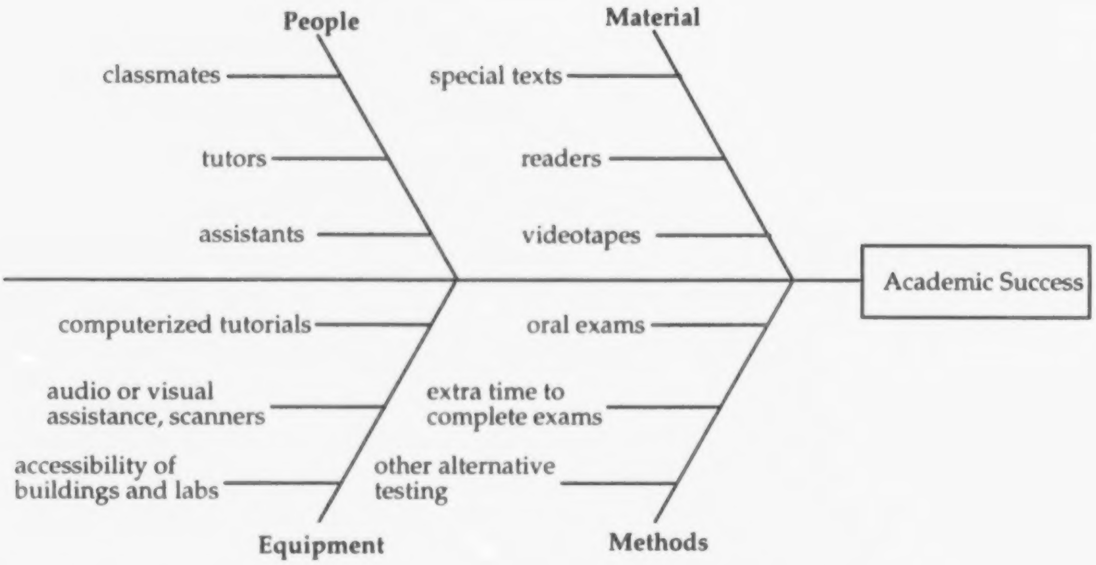
People
classmates
tutors
assistants
Material
special texts
readers
videotapes
Academic Success
computerized tutorials
audio or visual assistance, scanners
accessibility of buildings and labs
Equipment
oral exams
extra time to complete exams
other alternative testing
Methods

Figure 6. Resources for Academic Success of Disabled Students: Fishbone Diagram

- Help the student identify the skills needed for various career options.

- Don't hesitate to be an advocate when the disabled advisee needs reasonable accommodation: it is the law.

Summary

Dealing successfully with special populations of undecided students is a challenge, but fundamentally, success depends upon treating everyone as an individual—a central tenet for all quality academic advising. In treating advisees as individuals, they are in fact being treated as a special population. The characteristics of a special adviser-advisee relationship are trust, respect, responsibility, solid data, mentoring/coaching, and preventing problems rather than detecting them after the fact. Success with undecided students involves making them feel special, not giving up on them even if they want to give up on themselves. Quality academic advising relationships add value to the student, the academic adviser, and the institution. They are win-win situations.

The quality tool Customer/Supplier Map—Advisee/Adviser Matrix in Figure 7 may be helpful in assisting the individual advisee-adviser relationship to grow and flourish.

The map matrix is a tool to access what is important to the advisee and what the adviser believes should be delivered. Individuals fill in the blanks according to their expectations and likely will develop a matrix of different items than those in the sample. Individuals then rank each others' "deliverables" and "needs/care-abouts." The results illustrate the starting point of the relationship; the advisee and adviser then agree upon a course of action. The importance of this approach is that it assumes nothing but instead builds on mutually supplied data.

Another important feature of this matrix is that it provides a continuous learning/assessment model because the adviser can seek a performance and relevance rating at any time on any supplier item; the advisee can seek similar information from the adviser about performance and relevance on any customer "care-about." The tool asks both parties to share the responsibility for maximizing learning.

Relevance: 3 = high 2 = medium 1 = low Performance: 5 = excellent 1 = poor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
Supplier/Advisor Deliverables	Trust	Respect	Responsibility	Data	Mentoring	Prevent *mindset*	Signatory	Disseminator	Interpreter	Skill Builder	Scholar	Role Model	Relevance	Performance
Advisee/Customer Needs & "Care-abouts"	**relationship characteristics**							**advisor roles/ levels**						
1) Available														
2) Knowledgeable a. degree requirements														
b. career opportunities														
3) Respectful														
4) Empathetic														
5) Guide														
6) Advocate														
7) Monitor														
8) Surrogate "---"														
9) Role Model														
10) Mentor														
11) Self Analysis a. strengths														
b. weaknesses														
c. opportunities														
d. threats														
Total Relevance														
Total Performance														

Figure 7. Customer/Supplier Map—Advisee/Adviser Matrix

The addition of Continuous Quality Improvement concepts and tools to academic advising enhances the likelihood of successful adviser-advisee relationships because the concepts are data-driven, not intuitive; they are fundamentally optimistic; they resist blaming others (there is no "they"); and focus upon improving processes. Academic advising is a process; learning is a process. Using systems thinking to improve processes can work both for the advisee and the adviser. Whether one chooses to incorporate aspects of quality programs into the advisement of special populations can be a personal choice. The desire to delight and to exceed our advisees' (customers') expectations, however, can never be considered a waste of professional effort.

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Chapter 8

Major-Changers: A Special Type of Undecided Student

George E. Steele

Undecided first-year students and students who change majors during their sophomore year or later share an overriding similarity: both need to explore academic and career options actively. Students in both groups are moving from an ill-defined position to an unplotted future. This active exploration process includes three essential areas: self-assessment, academic and career information collection, and decision making. Helping students gather, evaluate and integrate information into the decision-making process is central to advising both students who are undecided initially and those who change majors later.

Major-changers are a distinct group; however,

> Students change their academic direction for many reasons (Elliott, 1984; Gordon, Newton, & Kramer, 1985; Gordon & Polson, 1985; Holland & Nichols, 1964; Theophilides, Terenzini, & Lorang, 1984; Titley & Titley, 1980). Many students enter college with little knowledge of the curricular requirements for the major they selected. They concentrate on the occupational relationships rather than the academic course work that is required. Some students have poor high school preparation for their chosen major (i.e., math and science foundations), therefore they do not perform well in these subjects in college. Other students are denied entrance to oversubscribed majors in such fields as the health professions and engineering as well as other fields indigenous to specific institutions. Still other students simply discover their interests change, or they are exposed to academic areas that were unknown to them when they entered college. Although the number of students affected by the oversubscription of certain majors and the other reasons cited above has grown, very few institutions have initiated special advising or counseling programs for this specific group (Gordon & Polson, 1985).

The timing of the transition from one major to another varies with individual students. Theophilides, Terenzini, and Lorang (1984) classified major-changers in three categories: early changers (those who change in their freshman year but not their sophomore year); late changers (those who change in their sophomore year but not their freshman year; and constant changers (those who reported changing in both their freshman and sophomore year).

According to Theophilides, Terenzini, and Lorang (1984), early changers (a) reported a high pre-college likelihood of changing major fields, (b) performed well during their freshman year, and (c) continued to develop academically and intellectually during the sophomore year. The constant changers showed a relatively weak academic performance and low levels of institutional and goal commitment during the freshman year. The late changers reported no intention of changing majors upon entering college but performed poorly during the sophomore year. Theophilides, Terenzini, and Lorang (1984) concluded that the freshman year, in particular, may be a testing ground for discovering academic abilities and adjusting to institutional reality.

These studies suggest that while students move through their course work, explore their options, and assess their talents, they are adjusting, adapting, and achieving various levels of success within the institution's curriculum. While many advising programs are tailored to meet the needs of the incoming undecided first-year student, few programs are designed to meet the specific needs of the major-changer (Gordon & Steele, 1992).

Although there are many similarities in advising students who are initially undecided and those who are changing majors, there are also differences. This chapter will examine these similarities and differences and will describe a model advising program that is designed to meet the special needs of students who are in a transition from one major to another. Two case studies will be presented to show how resources and techniques for advising major-changers can be integrated. Finally, evaluation procedures and the steps needed to establish an advising program for major-changers will be discussed.

Comparing Undecided Students and Major-Changers

As stated earlier, undecided students and major-changers share one overriding similarity: both need to explore academic and career options actively. Through self-assessment, both groups can identify their strengths and limitations, likes and dislikes, goals and ambitions. Both can use help in recognizing their established decision-making styles and strategies. Both need guidance in how to obtain and interpret educational and occupational information. Both need help with the decision-making process.

Major-changers are different in several ways, however. Major-changers have established academic histories. Prior course work and academic records can limit new curricular options. Students who are changing majors may find that prior course work may be incompatible or not transferrable with new major requirements. In these cases, some majors may be impractical for major-changers to pursue due to the extended length of time and money needed to complete a degree. In other cases, students with low grade point averages may find it is unrealistic, if not impossible, to raise their grades to gain entry into selective admissions programs. Undecided students during their first year can select from a wider range of academic options for exploration. Major-changers, because they carry their own academic histories with them, often have a more limited realm of educational directions from which to choose.

Students who change majors also need advice on how to pursue certain career goals through alternative majors. For example, when students are unable to access a business major, they need to become aware of alternative paths which could lead to a career in business such as a liberal arts major, or, if offered on their campus, alternative majors within agriculture, education, or other academic areas. Advisers can assist these students to identify new but compatible connections they have not considered. Major-changers often must plot a totally new career direction. Initially some students select majors for which they do not have the necessary abilities. Engineering students, for example, may not have the math and science background required for the course work. Not only do they need a new major, they also need a new career direction.

Major-changers who are juniors or seniors also need to begin work on other related career skills (e.g., résumé writing and other job search skills). While first-year students need to address these issues, major-changers need to be more active in setting alternative career goals and acquiring these skills. Advisers can often help students recognize their importance and identify the resources to help accomplish these tasks.

A Model Advising Program for Major-Changers

A program for advising major-changers in University College at The Ohio State University called Alternatives Advising Program can serve as an example of the components and resources necessary for an effective approach. This program was established to provide more personal and intensive advising to students with advanced credit hours who were changing academic and vocational directions (Gordon & Steele, 1992). Since student populations vary greatly from institution to institution, any program of this type needs to be tailored to a specific institutional setting. Institutions with selective admissions majors, for example, may find that students denied entry into these majors may be the predominate group needing assistance. Other institutions may find their major-changers to be those who simply change their minds as upper class students. In addition to assessing the type of student needing special services, the organization of the advising program itself may dictate how these students are served.

During the early 1980s, thousands of students at Ohio State were being affected by selective or oversubscribed majors. The time needed to advise these students effectively was not available to the advising staff, nor did many advisers have the necessary expertise to advise such a diverse and complicated group. When the pressures of advising such large numbers were realized, a new advising approach was created. Criteria were established for specific academic areas in which these students were being affected so that they could be identified early (e.g., pre-business students who were performing inadequately in core business courses, engineering students who were not completing the math and science courses in a timely way). Before the Alternatives Program was available, many of these students drifted without help or left the university.

Specific categories of students were identified for Alternatives advising (Gordon & Steele, 1992):

- students with advanced credit hours who were not making progress toward a degree in their present major. (This judgment was made jointly by the student's initial adviser and the Alternatives adviser.);
- students who had been denied admission to a selective major;
- students who had been unsuccessful in completing prerequisites for a specific major program;
- students with junior standing who were still undecided about a major; and
- students with advanced credit hours who had made an unrealistic decision to change majors and were not progressing.

Students in these categories are assigned to an adviser in the Alternatives program. The advantages of the program are explained to the student, and an intake advising session is arranged as quickly as possible.

The following goals were set for the program:

- to provide intrusive academic and career advising to students with advanced credit hours who were in transition from one major to another;
- to provide a personal, caring setting for these students so they sensed support during a transition that often felt confusing and difficult;
- to help students choose a realistic, attainable major and to demonstrate stability in that choice over time;

- to provide services designed specifically to help these students so their individual needs were recognized and met; and

- to increase the retention and graduation rate of these students who, according to past research, were prone to attrition.

It was recognized from the outset that special advising skills would be needed to deal effectively with the special concerns and needs these students presented. Advisers who work with Alternatives students are trained generalists and have the knowledge and skills to assist with career exploration and decision making. In particular, they are knowledgeable about alternative academic preparation for different career paths. Adviser characteristics that are considered essential to advising these students are accessibility, positive attitudes toward the change process, in-depth academic and career knowledge, counseling skills, and patience.

Core Components of the Program

It was recognized that with the large numbers of students to be served, approaches other than one-to-one advising had to take place. In addition to individual advising, group approaches and a credit course were established to provide a comprehensive program (Gordon & Steele, 1992). These core components are described below.

Individual advising. Sensitivity to each student's particular situation must be acknowledged if a trusting adviser-advisee relationship is to be established. Some students in transition are emotionally involved in the need to change majors. They may feel they have failed or refuse to admit their previous goals are unattainable. Advisers must help students identify and resolve emotional barriers when these barriers are blocking progress. Initial appointments offer advisees the opportunity to become familiar with the students' past academic record and their perceptions of their situation so that new goals may be established. The student is informed of both adviser and advisee responsibilities in searching for a new direction. The Alternatives Advising Program is described to the students, and they are introduced to resources for accessing information about academic alternatives based on their interests and abilities. (Both printed materials and computerized academic and career information are available.) A general advising plan is formulated cooperatively, and assignments for the next advising appointment are made. Over time an intrusive and intensive mode of advising takes place until students reach an alternative decision. Advisers then help them implement their choice.

Group advising. Group advising takes the form of special group sessions, workshops, and academic information sessions. Students in certain majors may hear at a specific time during the school year that they will not be able to enter the major to which they aspire (e.g., architecture students are informed in the spring about their entrance into that program). Special Alternative group sessions are arranged with the timing of the notification, and students are informed in the rejection letter (with the cooperation of the School of Architecture) about these special sessions. Each session is geared to the specific group's needs and provides information that will be of common value.

Career exploration workshops. Career exploration workshops are also held for those students who wish to explore occupational options. While the focus is on self-assessment and occupational information, students are also exposed to academic major information and the relationships between academic and career choices.

Credit-bearing course. Perhaps one of the most effective methods for working with groups of students has been the creation of a credit course designed specifically for this population. A workbook written especially for this purpose guides students through a systematic decision-making process (Gordon & Sears, 1994). Six units cover a reassessment of the students' current situation, an introduction to academic fields, units on self-assessment and occupational exploration relating to academic major choices, and units incorporating the decision-making process, which includes identifying alternatives, selecting one, and formulating an action plan for implementing the decision. The Alternatives resource center includes a small career library, many printed materials created especially for Alternatives advising, and computerized career information systems. These resources are used with individual students, the group sessions, as well as with students enrolled in the credit course.

Case Studies

The following case studies demonstrate how the various aspects of the program are drawn upon to advise major-changers. The purpose is to highlight the opportunities to improve the advising process when certain services and resources are available.

Case Study 1: Susan

Susan was referred to the Alternatives Program at the end of her sophomore year. She had been pursuing a degree in elementary education but was denied entry. Her 2.55 GPA was considered too low when compared with the average accepted GPA of 3.0. Susan had always wanted to be an elementary education teacher and entered the university declaring this major. Through her two years of coursework, she excelled in courses in English, the social sciences, and the humanities. She performed only average work in math and science.

Although Susan was sent a letter indicating she was now assigned to an Alternatives adviser, she either ignored or delayed making an appointment as requested. Since Alternatives students are closed out of the telephone registration process, she was forced to see an Alternatives adviser to enroll for the following term.

To meet the demands of large numbers of students during the registration period, a special academic information workshop was created especially for former elementary education majors. Susan was one of ten students assigned to a special session.

At the beginning of the workshop, students were provided with a copy of their advising report and asked to assess their chances for being admitted to the elementary major if they were to apply again. They were assisted to assess how long they could take the pre-elementary requirements until there were no courses left to select. They were also helped to calculate the grades they would need to achieve in the remaining courses in order to raise their GPA to a competitive level.

After this exercise, several possible options were offered. First, they were given a list of alternative majors that were compatible with the interests, abilities, and values inherent in the elementary major. Second, alternative routes to the elementary education major itself were discussed. These included working on another degree with the intent of becoming certified later, doing well academically, or transferring to another institution. A handout reviewing these options was distributed.

The next step was for the students to propose a schedule for the following term. Advantages and disadvantages of the proposed coursework were discussed. The workshop ended with the adviser arranging an individual meeting with each student at a later date, but before the beginning of the next term.

Susan came to this session with mixed emotions. She wanted to be an elementary teacher but realized her chances for gaining entry into the institution's program were not good. She did not want to transfer to another school. The adviser asked Susan to analyze her reasons for wanting to be a teacher. She indicated she had made the choice in junior high and had always received positive encouragement for her choice. At this point the adviser reviewed her options including the possibility of majoring in areas of her academic strengths. Since she earned A grades in English and psychology, she was asked if teaching or working in these areas would be of interest to her. The following possible options were outlined:

- Had she considered teaching at the middle or high school level?
- Would she be interested in obtaining a bachelor's degree at this institution and seeking elementary certification later at another institution?
- Would she be interested in finding out what careers that people with English and social science degrees pursued?

Although Susan had not considered any of the above options, she indicated she was interested in investigating all three. The adviser reviewed the requirements for a degree in English and psychology and explained how her previous coursework fit with the requirements for those majors.

Susan was then referred to a briefing session which explained how to use two computerized career information systems, DISCOVER and SIGI-Plus. Susan was given specific assignments as she worked through the computer system. She was to use the self-assessment sections to compare her personal interests, values, and abilities to possible careers related to education, English, and psychology; she was to access the list of other elementary education programs in the state; and she was to obtain a list of possible occupations related to English and psychology majors. Finally, Susan was referred to an adviser who was a specialist in the liberal arts so that she could discuss in more depth the curricular requirements for English and psychology majors.

Susan returned to her Alternatives adviser three weeks later. They discussed the information she had gathered. With a mixture of reluctance and hope, Susan decided to explore further the possibility of a major in English and a minor in psychology with an emphasis on child development. She also had her interest in teaching at the middle school confirmed through the self-assessment results from the computer systems. Because of this exploration process, Susan was now able to describe why *she* felt teaching was a good choice for her, rather than making the choice based on other people's opinions.

Susan now felt more competent to make an alternative choice based on solid information. In addition to changing her course schedule to reflect her new ideas, the Alternatives adviser reviewed the additional steps needed to confirm her new direction. Susan contacted four elementary education certification programs for information about admissions and program descriptions. She inquired about co-op and internship programs which would help her decide whether to pursue a career in education or a career in another field.

Susan remained in the Alternatives Program for two more quarters. During this time she discussed her experiences and additional research with her adviser. Susan finally decided to major in English and minor in child development. After graduation, she completed the necessary course work for elementary certification at another institution.

Case Study 2: John

John, a junior pre-business major, had been locked out of the registration process because he was not making progress toward that degree. His business adviser referred him to the Alternatives advising area for scheduling. John felt frustrated when he entered the Alternatives area. All he wanted was for someone to sign his schedule which contained more business courses.

When the Alternatives adviser met with John, she was aware of his impatience and frustration. She assured him she would sign his schedule, but wanted to discuss the courses he had chosen. Together they reviewed John's academic record. John admitted difficulty in calculus and accounting. When asked why he had chosen business, John replied, "I want to be sure of a job when I graduate." After more discussion John admitted he felt pressure from his parents to decide on a major, and he thought business could at least guarantee him a job. At this point the Alternatives adviser reassured John that they would put together a schedule before he left and that they would formulate a long-term plan so John could look realistically at all his options. Although John still insisted he wanted a business degree, the adviser suggested more general education courses that would fulfill requirements for almost any major, including business. John was also informed of a three credit-hour course that could help him systematically explore many academic majors and careers. He was also assigned to a computerized career information system workshop. John admitted these suggestions pleased him. This confirmed the adviser's impression that John probably needed a highly structured format to aid him with his exploration.

Through the Alternatives course John was able to explore many academic majors in an orderly, systematic way. He was able to review how he had made past decisions and how his decision-making style had influenced past choices. Since his adviser was the instructor for the course, he received individual help in processing the information he was gathering. Through the course he was able to use the computer systems, conduct informational interviews, write a résumé, and plot his remaining academic course work to assess where internships or co-ops could be of value. Finally, John made a five minute class presentation on what he decided to do and why.

At the end of the course, John had selected a new major. Through his exploration he discovered the organizational communications major. This area provided him the opportunity to pursue a major that was business oriented, but one which used his strongest abilities. Through the course, he confirmed the knowledge that he had talent in writing and media presentations. Many of the business courses John had taken previously were also requirements for his new major.

These two case studies are considered typical for the Alternatives advising area. Since each student presents special needs, the comprehensiveness of the program allows for individually designed approaches.

Program Evaluation

An extensive evaluation program has been established to monitor students' progress and to determine the effectiveness of the program's individual components. In a longitudinal study to compare the retention of students in the Alternatives area with comparable groups of students in the institution, Alternatives students had the highest graduation rate, had made the most stable choices (i.e., had graduated with the major they had selected while in the Alternatives Program), and fewer Alternative students had withdrawn from the university (Steele, Kennedy, & Gordon, 1993).

Establishing an Advising Program for Major-Changers

Although the program described here was created on a large campus within a university college setting, its goals, objectives, organization, and program components could be adapted at any size or type of institution where there is a commitment to serve major-changers in the most effective way. The following suggestions are made when considering this type of advising program (Gordon & Steele, 1992):

1. Determine the number and type of major-changers on your campus. Study the patterns of student change, attrition, and other data that would help to determine this population's particular needs.

2. Once the need has been discerned, seek administrative and other campus support for establishing the type of program that would be realistically possible given the institution's advising system, financial resources, and the political climate.

3. Design program objectives and goals, program components, and how the program might be delivered. Consider reorganizing existing staff and services or better coordination of existing services.

4. Implement the program including special program elements, individual advising protocols, library resources, computer resources, special advising materials, and other services needed by this special group. Choose staff carefully and implement an ongoing training program.

5. Establish an evaluation program that can help track students who use the services, provide feedback on the quality of individual advising taking place, and the effectiveness of different program elements.

Summary

Major-changers constitute a larger group of students than those who *enter* undecided in many institutions. On many campuses these students drift without recognition. The rewards for creating a special advising program to assist them during their often difficult period of transition from one major to another can be enormous.

On some campuses responsibility for these students is often placed on the advising program for undecided students, *if* one exists. Unfortunately, students who are changing majors at many institutions are often ignored or not acknowledged as a group with special needs deserving of special advising approaches. It is imperative to recognize that these "undecided" students need as much, and sometimes even *more* assistance than the entering undecided student.

Theophilides, Terenzini, and Lorang (1984) note that there are many influences causing change of major and that they are the result of "student interaction with institutional reality and the consequences of this interaction with one's self-image" (p. 277). Although the institution may not be directly responsible for this phenomenon, there must be a certain degree of accountability to make sure major-changers are provided the *type* of help they need at the critical *time* they need it.

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Chapter 9

Undecided Students in Community Colleges

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Undecided students in community colleges are in many ways not unlike students in four-year colleges and universities. They are entering freshmen, major-changers, adults, athletes, honor students, and underprepared students (Gordon, 1984). Yet in many instances, by virtue of the community college mission and the student's individual life experience, there may be unique features of the undecided student in the community college. The purpose of this chapter is to identify some of these features and discuss how they impact the student and the adviser in the decision-making process.

Mission of the Community College

The mission of the community college has changed little over the years. Persistent focus has been on providing comprehensive higher educational opportunities to a broad spectrum of the population, a mission emerging from society's values, technological demands, and economic possibilities. Cohen and Brawer (1989) describe curricular functions of the community college and characterize this comprehensive educational endeavor as usually including "academic transfer preparation, vocational-technical education, continuing education, remedial education, and community service" (p. 16). Each of these mission functions has implications for undecided students.

Academic Transfer Preparation

Many students attend a community college intending to transfer to a four-year institution but are unsure of their field of study or college of choice. These students are similar to many entering freshmen at four-year colleges and universities, sharing common needs related to being undecided about a career direction or major. In addition, they lack essential information about personal characteristics and life direction, available academic options, and career opportunities.

For some community college students, decision making is also made difficult by the need to address developmental skill deficits. Although these students may be capable, prior life and educational experiences hindered development of their potential, a potential which can be discovered and developed at the community college. It is often through this developmental growth that students discover their aptitudes, abilities, and interests, and make effective decisions regarding career directions and college majors. Others may experience personal or social concerns such as values-goal conflicts, interest-ability conflicts, interest-energy level conflicts, and conflicts with significant others (Gordon, 1984). These concerns directly affect decision-making needs and processes.

Typically, undecided entering freshmen enroll in programs such as liberal arts, general studies, or individual studies. Some of these programs are highly structured, guaranteeing that students will take appropriate courses for transfer. Other curricula maintain greater flexibility of elective options, allowing students to explore courses in various areas more freely. While this flexibility may be used beneficially, some students find themselves at risk in regard to transfer since some of the courses chosen may not be transferable.

The need to be cognizant of transfer issues is a major difference between undecided community college freshmen enrolled in transfer curricula and those entering freshman students in baccalaureate degree granting colleges and universities. Several factors highlight this difference. First, there is the long-range reality of needing to go through a second exploration, decision making, and college adjustment process. Unless the student enrolls in some type of joint admissions program, this realm of decision making is necessary and often is an additional pressure for the community college student. There is also the matter of facing the "acceptance process" either for the second time or as a delayed experience. For some this is not easy, but rather a harrowing experience, especially when geography limits college options. Secondly, knowing that the transfer college decision need not be made at the time of entering the community college, the student may tend to "put off" the decision. Sometimes this delay extends into the second year and negatively impacts on admission to a four-year college of choice. A third factor, most often of a positive character, is that the decision-making process is enhanced by additional life maturity and some college experience. This background can be an asset to the undecided student in making decisions, a benefit which was unavailable when entering the community college. Advising the undecided transfer student is enhanced by recognizing the possible presence of these factors. Assessment of the importance of each factor with any given individual will enrich the effectiveness of advisement.

Vocational-Technical Education for Employment

Students entering a community college who are seeking a degree to prepare for employment are faced with an immediate decision regarding a major. Since career-oriented programs are content specific for the purpose of job preparation, little room for course options is available. While students may change between career-oriented programs, such changes between these highly specific programs may often result in a substantial loss of course credit.

While some students have given careful thought to their program decision, others select a program only because of the need to make a choice. That decision may be based on the influence of friends, parental expectations, or other factors. Some have given very little thought to the decision. For the later group, courses often become uninteresting, and the student may begin to face not only decisions regarding career direction but also decisions related to "staying in school."

Others may resist courses outside the technical field of study (i.e., general education courses), or question the value of courses not transferable from one program to another. These issues could lead the student to withdraw from courses during the semester. Such withdrawals could have an impact on financial aid and could cause feelings of failure, of time wasted, or of indecisiveness. There is also the matter of the additional length of time needed to complete a new program.

Some students entering vocational/technical programs are sure of their educational and career plans. During their studies, however, they grow uncertain regarding their chosen career direction. This may not only return them to indecision but may also force them to question aspects of themselves and the life direction about which they had been confident. In some sense, there is an experience of loss faced by the student.

In addition, some students make last-minute decisions to attend college. Consequently, they too have not thought through their choice of degree program. By applying late, their choice of courses may be limited, a further complication in making educational and career decisions. Sometimes these students bring with them low self-esteem and, consequently, may never have considered baccalaureate studies as an option. For those who are successful in their coursework and who discover academic potential, personal goals change and issues related to transfer will need to be addressed.

Continuing Education

Providing the opportunity for adults to return to college for job training or retraining or to broaden their educational background is another significant role of the community college. Returning adult students comprise a highly diversified group of individuals rich in life experiences with different backgrounds, needs, and skills. One commonality among returning adults is that they are in some form of transition, whether it be a career change, retraining due to job loss, a professional education after raising a family, or other reasons. And it is a transition with both risk and opportunity, sometimes embracing feelings of uncertainty and fear. Many adults lack confidence in their ability to study and learn, are uncertain about the demands of college level work, and are apprehensive about being in classes with the traditional age college student. Many have limited time because of external demands of job, family, and other life roles. Some come to the community college with extensive education and experience, while others have little. Many attend part-time. Diversity indeed!

Being undecided regarding educational and career plans is sometimes difficult for adults, who often feel that one "ought to know" what one wants to do at this point in life. While the adult may view background experience as an obstacle to career and educational decision making (e.g., "I've only raised kids and volunteered . . . that's all."), such a background can be reframed into a rich resource on which to draw in making effective decisions. Advisers who recognize such possibilities can creatively utilize this resource as they help students through the career decision-making process.

Remedial Education

Many students begin their higher education experience at a community college because of remedial education needs. Basic reading, writing and computational skills may be weak in relation to college level studies. This is most often due to inadequate academic preparation, having been away from formal education for a period of time, or having had minimal education due to leaving school before completion. Often, such returnees to formal education now have a deep realization of education's value and the motivation to support its pursuit successfully. Many students needing remedial education may spend the equivalent of one semester to a full year building their background before they can enter college level courses. Consequently, the opportunity to experience courses in various areas may be delayed, which also delays the decision-making process regarding educational and career plans.

While some students recognize and accept the need for remedial work, others resist such remedial and developmental courses, although these courses may be prerequisites for college credit courses. Students may resent the institution for identifying such "shortcomings" or may be embarrassed at their lack of college-level skills. Some are concerned that enrollment in remedial courses will delay their anticipated time for degree completion and will resist adviser recommendations insisting that "things are different now" and that "I can do it" regardless of readiness.

Each of these situations presents challenges to the adviser when working with the undecided student. While it is easy to discount the student's resistance or to label the student as uncooperative, recognizing the reactions within the student's whole life context may help in working with the student. Awareness of possible factors generating the student's feelings and possible responses may guide the adviser to a more complete understanding of the student and how best to help him or her make decisions.

Themes Related to Many Undecided Community College Students

First-Generation College or Working Class Families

Many undecided community college students are the first in their family to attend college, coming from working class backgrounds. The nature of the college experience, demands, expectations, and values may be a new experience for both the student and the student's family. For many parents, a college education is seen as a way to assure a "better life" for their children than they have had (Rubin, 1976). Unrealistic expectations of college are also not uncommon, whether they are too high or too low. Often, first-generation students who were not nurtured in their high school experience or have not researched career options and programs make decisions based on unrealistic or uninformed beliefs. They may also lack accurate awareness of the demands of their college coursework and of the degree requirements. As a result, many students will attempt a heavy course load in addition to working an extensive number of hours. Others attempt not only full-time study and employment but also become involved in outside activities. The problem becomes not involvement but rather the number of commitments.

Some first-generation students bring with them an anticipation of immediate connection between their courses and the world of work. For some courses this connection is not easily made and will lead to questions such as, "Why do I need to take that English or math course when what I want to do is be a musician or a police office?" One outcome may be that if the value is not realized the student is likely to do poorly in the course.

Some first-generation college students may also experience little support or encouragement for their educational endeavors, particularly if the family or social network has not experienced and valued such education. Consequently, students may not view transfer to a baccalaureate program as an option, which may limit their choice of program and their openness to broader career exploration. When they encounter problems or frustrations related to career and educational plans, undecided students may not have the encouragement to seek out resource people or the support in understanding that what is being experienced is very "normal."

Commuter Students

Most students attending community colleges are commuters who have grown up in the surrounding area and live with their family, either with parents and siblings, spouse and children, or as single parents. Consequently, they may not seek to explore different options or services as readily as residential students who are beginning a whole new phase of their lives, whole new experiences "away from home." Furthermore, many commuter students maintain multiple responsibilities (i.e., care for children, older parents, job, etc.) which can also limit their decisions. This may impact not only their college experiences but also their occupational and college selections which must match local availability.

In addition, undecided students who live in their home community may tend to make decisions with all the influences and resources that affected previous decision making. Such a feature can be either a major asset to their decision making or a persistent obstacle. It may also be that the undecided student feels limited or confined, and is unable to identify how to go about making a change.

Alertness to the resources and limitations in the undecided student's life as a place-bound or commuter student can raise questions for the adviser that will enhance an understanding of the student. Often, simple recognition and clarification of circumstances can provide insight that generates new ideas, identifies gaps, or stimulates new thinking.

Financial Need

Students often indicate that a reason for attending a community college is the low cost.

A high percentage of community college students receive financial aid. Substantial numbers receive social services or unemployment benefits. Sometimes these very support resources limit the undecided student's career and educational options because of restrictions placed on them by the funding regulations (e.g., social service recipients cannot be in transfer curricula). Requirements are generally localized within state or local communities. It would seem imperative for advisers to be sensitive to these possible factors in working with the undecided student. Financial circumstances provide real constraints. Yet, financial limitations can extinguish the undecided student's opportunity for exploring dreams and long range possibilities which may be realistic with appropriate nurturing and support.

Two-year colleges enroll approximately 43% of the nation's undergraduates and 51% of all first-time entering freshmen.

Multicultural Students

Two-year colleges enroll approximately 43% of the nation's undergraduates and 51% of all first-time entering freshmen. Because community colleges are often most accessible, almost half (46%) of all Black, Hispanic, Asian American and Native American students in 1988 were enrolled in them. To be more specific, community colleges enrolled 56% of Hispanic undergraduates, 54% of Native American undergraduates, 42% of Black undergraduates, and 40% of Asian undergraduates, comprising about 30% of community college enrollment (Boyer, 1988). In California alone, about 80% of the underrepresented ethnic minority students who are enrolled in California's postsecondary institutions are in the California community colleges (Kerschner, 1990). Multicultural student populations provide a rich resource for celebrating differences, for exposure to various views, histories, and cultures, and for offering arenas for questioning and decision making that prepare one for living in a culturally sensitive world. Each student brings to the college not only his or her self but some dimension of experience related to culture and ethnicity. In addition, issues brought to the campus may range from an emerging pride in one's ethnic identity to deep anger and distrust resulting from societal and institutional racism and discrimination. For some students, their experience may be of minimal importance or impact. For others it may be a strong sense of identification and influence. And for others it may be a newly-found area for personal exploration. For all students, though, factors of race, ethnicity, and culture have some dimension of importance. In regard to the undecided student, an adviser's awareness of the level of importance for the individual student will enhance the adviser's effectiveness in working with that student as a whole person.

Advisers can also greatly benefit from ongoing professional growth in regard to diversity, multicultural issues, and personal self-appraisal related to one's own attitude. Awareness of personal biases is a beginning step in relating to and effectively communicating with persons at whom the bias is directed. Developing a multicultural perspective is a deep, enriching step toward effectively working with persons culturally different from one's self. With such a perspective the adviser can assist the unde-cided student in a way which empowers the student within her/his whole life context.

Complex Histories

Complex academic and personal life histories are not uncommon among undecided community college students. Often such histories compound issues related to being undecided. Some features of these histories have already been discussed, such as being a first-generation college student, being a returning adult with dependents, or being forced to make a career change due to injury or job layoff. Other components of the complex histories that may impact decision making might include being in recovery, meeting probation requirements or potential future employment restrictions due to a prison record, confronting challenges of a recent disability, adjusting to becoming a divorced single parent, and others. What is important is that the adviser be cognizant of possible complex histories that may affect decision making. This does not mean that one must know about each personal history. It does mean, however, that the adviser is most effective when accepting the student as an individual, providing opportunity for student development based on the student's readiness, empowering the student toward new visions within the context of the student's life experience, and letting the student know that she/he matters.

Advisement Strategies for the Undecided Community College Student

Ideal approaches or empirically based strategies do not exist for working specifically with undecided community college students. Nor would that even be proposed. What might be most helpful in advising undecided students are general guidelines with which individual advisers may approach their work. Throughout this chapter, implications and guidelines have been noted within each subject area. To be added to these general guidelines are several further considerations.

Timing. Given the nature of the two-year college degree program combined with the issues discussed in this chapter, it is essential to reach undecided students as early as possible in their enrollment. Some form of intrusive advisement may provide the structure with which to reach out to the students rather than waiting for them to seek assistance.

Teaching effective decision-making skills. Along with developing academic capabilities, learning effective decision-making processes and skills can prove beneficial for immediate as well as lifelong needs. Assisting the undecided student in establishing decision-making processes that "fit" is one means of empowering the student toward self-direction.

Identifying life patterns. Guiding students, especially adults, toward identifying life-patterns that have worked when making successful decisions in the past may prove to be valuable in making current occupational and educational decisions.

Embracing a developmental approach to undecided students. Gordon (1984) states that "a developmental approach recognizes life stages and tasks and behaviors accomplished at each of these stages" (p. 17). Recognizing and understanding life stages provides a framework or guidepost to individualizing advisement of the undecided student. A developmental orientation can draw on rich theoretical resources, such as Chickering's (1969) psychosocial developmental perspective; the scheme of cognitive and ethical development by Perry (1981); the person-environment work of Bronfenbrenner (1979) and people-in-systems framework of Egan and Cowan (1979); Knowle's (1984) work on adult learners; Gilligan's (1982) and Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule's (1986) insights on women's development; Cross's (1978) racial identify process of development; or Troiden's (1989) stages of lesbian and gay identity development. Such a cursory array of resources can be a starting point for further professional development in enhancing one's developmental perspective.

Considering the student's whole-life context. It is valuable to recognize that the student's life context involves the ongoing transactions among three components: (a) the individual, including personality, history, culture, abilities, interests, and dreams; (b) the college, including academic services, student services, other educational opportunities, as well as the personnel, mission, and nature of the institution in its entirety; and (c) the community, including the student's home community of family, friends, and organizations. A difference between this life context and the context of the non-commuter college experience is that at the non-commuter college, the college most often fills both the role of "college" and the role of "community."

Gordon (1984) notes that "a lifelong career decision-making approach recognizes that an individual's personality in tandem with the environmental pressures he or she faces at a given time influences not only the choice itself but also the mechanics of the decision" (p. 17). This is the whole-life context impacting on both the choices made and the methods of making such choices. Sensitivity to the total context as experienced by the undecided community college student will enrich the adviser's work with the student in effective decision making.

Summary

This chapter addresses considerations for working with undecided students in the community college setting and describes their special advising needs. The unique mission of the community college incorporates not only special curricular considerations when advising undecided students, but also the characteristics of those students. While vocational-technical education usually does not allow for indecision initially, students who wish to change curricula later face complications which may delay or limit their choices. Undecided adult students, those requiring remediation, and those with complex histories need special advising approaches.

First-generation college students, commuter students, and multicultural students comprise a large segment of the community college enrollment. Undecided students within these student populations present a challenge that must encompass an understanding and sensitivity to their special needs.

Advisement strategies that are especially helpful in advising undecided students in community colleges include identifying and providing services for exploration upon entry; creating programs to teach decision making as a process; helping adult students, especially, identify and use life patterns that have been successful in other situations; and embracing a developmental approach so that the student's "whole-life context" is incorporated into the decision-making process. When these guidelines are followed, working with undecided community college students in an advising, teaching, or counseling capacity can be substantially enriched.

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Chapter 10

Training Advisers to Work with Undecided Students

Ralph Anttonen

When outlining a program for training advisers to assist undecided students, it is important to keep in mind what is relevant for training advisers who work with *all* students. Some of the same objectives, content, training methods, and materials that are used in working with programs in general will also be important in efforts with undecided students. However, as Frost (1991) has highlighted, undecided students need to be encouraged to "discover interests and explore options before deciding about a major," to be assured that being "undecided is acceptable," to "maintain a positive attitude to change," and be encouraged "to be responsible for their decisions" (p. 56). Thus, any program that trains advisers to work with undecided students needs to emphasize the above four areas, all of which would not necessarily be stressed when working with students who have already decided on a major or who are in another select population. This chapter will discuss the objectives of such a program, the content, various training methods, a variety of training materials, pre-service versus in-service training, and the evaluation of the training effort.

Objectives

In designing any program it is important to have clearly developed objectives. Thus, in building training programs for advisers of undecided students it is imperative that one establish a set of common objectives to be accomplished during the training program and which can be used as a basis for evaluation later.

Listed below are a set of objectives for general adviser training programs developed at Shippensburg University in Pennsylvania. This program was recognized by ACT/NACADA as an Outstanding Institutional Advising Program for 1993.

Objectives

1. Explain to advisers the background and organization of the university.

2. Help advisers understand the characteristics and techniques that are essential in working with students in transition.

3. Provide advisers with a working definition of developmental advising and of the advising process.

4. Help advisers become knowledgeable about their role and responsibility in the advising process.

5. Familiarize advisers with the academic programs and requirements, academic policies and procedures, and campus resources.

6. Instruct advisers through practice sessions how to help students explore and test their ideas through course work.

7. Familiarize advisers with the career development process in educational and vocational decision making.

8. Teach advisers effective dialogue.

9. Familiarize advisers with the legal implications of advising, the Buckley Amendment, and professionalism in academic advising.

10. Teach advisers how and when to refer students for additional or specialized help.

11. Instruct advisers in the use of resource material.

12. Teach advisers how to maintain records of advising sessions.

13. Evaluate the effectiveness of the advisers' development workshops.

> *Advisers of undecided students will need additional training in the knowledge and techniques for helping their advisees with the exploration and decision-making processes.*

When training advisers who work specifically with undecided students, other objectives may be added to the list. Some sample objectives might be:

1. Familiarize advisers with the unique characteristics of undecided students as described in the vast literature about this population.

2. Instruct advisers in all the academic major choices at the institution so that as generalists, they may offer the undecided student comprehensive and unbiased academic information.

3. Teach advisers of undecided students basic counseling skills so that they may sensitively deal with the anxiety and confusion which some undecided students experience.

4. Reinforce the need for integrating academic and career information and to provide more in-depth information about these relationships.

Objectives may vary from institution to institution and individuals who are responsible for undecided student adviser training programs are encouraged to develop a set of objectives pertinent to their particular situation.

Content

In developing the content for a pre-service training program for advisers of undecided students, it is important to keep in mind that there are certain general topics that need to covered. In addition, there are other topics which can be very specific to the institution and which may not be included in the training provided by all colleges and universities at the pre-service level.

When the content of various adviser training programs of different institutions is examined, common general topics often emerge. Usually such training programs begin with a description of the college environment in which the adviser will be working. This description very often includes facts about the institution and data gathered about its incoming students. Such comparisons will often highlight the characteristics of the undecided student so that advisers can determine how their undecided advisees compare to both the general college population and the nationwide samples of students.

A second topic that needs to be included in the training program is the advising process or procedure itself. This process needs to highlight the roles and expectations that the student will have of the adviser and the adviser will have of the student. Advisers of undecided students will need additional training in the knowledge and techniques for helping their advisees with the exploration and decision-making processes. This is an area in which advising decided and undecided students is very different (although many "decided" students would benefit from learning about this process as well).

Two closely related topics that need to be included in the training program are student characteristics and development, and communication skills and techniques. In order for advisers to be effective with undecided students, they must have an understanding of the level of development of the students with whom they are working and the types of skills they will need to communicate effectively. Understanding the different stages of development and the decision making strategies that undecided students employ will help advisers individualize their advising approaches. A fifth topic to be included in the training program involves campus resources. Advisers should be familiar with the various types of services that are available on campus. In addition to learning about resources, they need to learn *how* and *when* to refer students to particular services.

A sixth topic to be included in the training program highlights information about various careers. Advisers should be made aware of the career planning resources available on campus including career counseling services, career library resources, computerized career planning systems, self-assessment activities (including testing), and other areas that can assist students to identify, gather, and process career-related information.

The final and perhaps most important topic to be covered in a training program for advisers of undecided students is the selection of a major. This training component should involve a discussion of how to help students assess their academic strengths, limitations, and interests, and identify personality traits that might indicate certain compatible academic areas. Just as important is information about the various majors that exist at that institution and how the curricular requirements of these majors are similar or different. Since many students equate a choice of major with a choice of occupation, helping advisers learn about these relationships (or non-relationships) should also be a priority.

In working with training program content, it is important to keep in mind that faculty and staff will bring various levels of expertise and experience to such training programs. The chart "Adviser Training Topics by Experience Levels" (next page) outlines various adviser training topics by experience levels.

As indicated, beginning advisers will need more basic information and skill development than experienced advisers who will want to refine their techniques and perhaps delve into more theoretical or research-oriented issues of working with students who are undecided. The development of the content of the training program will be institution specific. However, as noted above, there are common adviser information and skill needs that can be addressed in almost all training efforts.

Training Techniques

In order to deliver the content involved in the training program, a variety of techniques and methods can be used. The techniques and methods selected will depend on the abilities and skills of the trainer and the type of activity involved. Some advisers will benefit greatly from a small group format, while others may prefer a lecture or large group approach. Many benefit by actually experiencing the activity. Although individualized instruction would be an excellent approach, the cost is often prohibitive. When a large group is involved, different methods may be employed so that a variety of participant learning styles may be accommodated. Different training methods or techniques are described below:

Lecture. While the lecture method is often employed when a large group is trained, a

Adviser Training Topics by Experience Levels

Beginning Advisers

Knowledge of general education requirements

Academic major/preparation requirements

Institutional policies and procedures (e.g. drop/add, withdrawal)

Use of student data base: transcript analysis; degree audit

Personal record keeping (if needed)

Campus resources including student affairs, career services, learning resources, etc.

Roles and responsibilities of adviser and advisees

Typical advisee program areas (i.e., freshmen in particular)

Basic communication and referral skills

Basic concepts of developmental advising

Campus demographics and traditions

Test interpretation

How to work with parents

Some Experience

Student developmental theory

Career advising

Crisis intervention

Decision-making strategies

Basic counseling techniques

How campus culture interacts with advising

Job market information about major/program area

Learning styles

Ethical issues in advising

Plus areas for beginning advisers if not covered before

Very Experienced

How to advise special populations (e.g., adults, honors, disabled)

How to advise culturally different students (e.g., Black, Hispanic)

Human growth and development

Ethical issues in advising

Retention strategies

Decision-making theory

Learning theory

Plus any areas in previous two levels not already covered

Source:

Gordon, V. N. (1992). Academic development and training. In V. N. Gordon, *Handbook of academic advising*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

disadvantage is that all individuals will be treated alike. One major advantage, however, is that a great deal of information can be disseminated quickly. When using the lecture method, the trainer must be sensitive to group processes, and control the flow of discussion away from individual to group needs.

Discussion. Many staff and faculty prefer the discussion approach for gaining information about institutional procedures, policies and services. This method can also be combined with the lecture method by allowing discussion to take place after the presentation of specific topics. Often advisers can pass along information to their peers who benefit from learning what others have experienced or think about certain issues and topics.

Observation. An extremely useful method in training advisers of undecided students is to have them observe either one or several experienced advisers working with an undecided student. Such observation can be done in an actual setting (with the student's permission) or through videotapes. At the conclusion of the session, it is important that a discussion take place so that new advisers can ask questions about situations that emerged during the interviewing process. This follow-up discussion will help the trainee gain knowledge and insight into what transpires in an advising session with an undecided student.

Quizzes. In order to be sure that advisers have learned the information that has been provided in the training session, it is often beneficial to provide a brief quiz that advisers can self-grade. Such a quiz is especially beneficial when advisers must master specific knowledge or procedural content.

Case studies. Bringing in actual student records and transcripts can be most beneficial since advisers are able to anticipate certain situations they will encounter in working with undecided students. It is also helpful for trainees to hear how other advisers would deal with specific problems or react to certain advising situations.

Interviews. Having trainees interview experienced advisers of undecided students gives new advisers an opportunity to hear how experienced people react and handle certain situations. It is also helpful to bring undecided students into the training session so that their perspective may be heard. The trainer must be skilled in drawing out pertinent information from the interviewee and in helping trainees generate relevant questions.

Simulations. Very often an experienced adviser, in conjunction with other advisers, can actually simulate an advising situation with an undecided student. Such an approach, if done well, can dramatize some of the problems that often surface in real advising situations.

Videotaping. Advisers can watch a real advising situation or a simulated one through a videotape. One advantage of a videotaped advising session is learning how to observe nonverbal communication and how it can be useful or counterproductive. Another advantage is the ability to stop the tape when more in-depth discussion is needed. Videotaping the trainees themselves in a real or simulated advising session can also be a valuable experience since this approach helps the beginning advisers determine where they might improve their techniques in working with undecided students.

Videotaping short information pieces about the majors on campus not only can help advisers learn about the curricula, but also can be used as part of a program to help undecided students identify options and gather specific information about majors in which they have an interest.

Role playing. Very often it is beneficial for advisers to play the role of an actual adviser with a real student or with an experienced adviser. This method provides immediate feedback to new advisers concerning their presentation of content as well as the affective dimension of the advising exchange. Non-verbal cues can also be discussed.

Any or all of the above methods can be employed in the course of training advisers for undecided students. Which ones are actually used will depend upon training needs, the experience of the trainer, the type of content offered, the amount of time available for the training, and the size of the group to be trained. Since learning styles are an important consideration, an attempt should be made to adapt the learning style of the individual with the training method employed (Gordon, 1992).

Training Materials

In order to have a successful training program for advisers of undecided students, it is important to provide a training manual or adviser's handbook for the sessions. The manual should contain a message from a top administrator giving support to the training effort and showing commitment at the highest level. The manual should also contain the training program's objectives so that participants are aware of what will be accomplished.

Materials for inclusion in the training of advisers for undecided students should include information about the institution, a profile of undecided students at that institution and about undecided students in general, the adviser's roles and responsibilities, the general education curriculum, listing of various office support systems, and other campus resources.

Materials describing the dynamics of the advising process and how certain approaches can be effective with undecided students should be included in the manual. These materials should focus on the differences between counseling and advising, decision making and advising, interview and communication skills, referral skills, and legal implications of the advising process.

Procedural items that are involved with registration, class scheduling, institutional procedures (e.g., drop/add, withdrawal, declaration of major) should be presented so that the adviser can readily access this information when needed.

Materials centering around the selection of majors is an extremely important part of a manual. Advisers should be provided with materials and techniques they can use when helping undecided students explore major options. Career relationships to these majors should also be provided. The career planning resources on campus should be listed with a description of each.

All of the above should be organized in an easily accessible format that is well-written and attractively packaged. Some institutions use adviser handbooks as training manuals while others develop a separate set of materials for the training program.

Pre-Service Versus In-Service Training

The majority of models presented in this chapter have dealt with pre-service or entry-level training programs. It is important to update experienced advisers periodically. As indicated before, the chart provides some of the topics that can be relevant for training experienced advisers. It is important that experienced advisers are updated on current institutional procedures as well as curricular and other important changes. A refinement of skills and the expansion of knowledge relevant to advising undecided students can be offered as in-service sessions at regular intervals.

Use of Outside Consultants

Some institutions invite outside speakers or facilitators as trainers for certain topics pertinent to undecided students. The advantage of using outside consultants is that their expertise may bring a more in-depth, focused approach to specific areas of advising undecided students that local trainers may not have. One disadvantage, of course, is cost. The National Academic Advising Association sponsors a Consultant's Bureau which provides the names of possible trainers for specific topics that might need to be addressed in training efforts for faculty or professional advisers.

Evaluating the Training Effort

Evaluating the training effort through immediate feedback from the trainees is important if future efforts are to be relevant and effective. Questionnaires disseminated during the regular school year can provide suggestions for topics and other essential information for future training efforts. However, assessing the effectiveness of the training program should be more outcome-based. The retention rate of undecided students, the number of students who actually choose a major within a reasonable amount of time, and student utilization of various campus facilities, can provide important information about the practical effects of training programs. Tracking undecided students from entry to graduation can provide "hard" data to administrators about the success of an overall program, of which training is a critical element.

Summary

The training of advisers to work with undecided students is essential. Setting objectives, choosing relevant topics, using productive training methods and materials, and developing an effective evaluation component are all necessary elements for a successful training program. In addition, attempts should be made to incorporate rewards and recognition for advisers who are participating in the training efforts. When faculty and staff participate in professional development activities everyone benefits, including the student, the adviser, and the institution.

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Evaluating the Training Effort

Evaluating the training effort through immediate feedback from the trainees is important if future efforts are to be relevant and effective. Questionnaires disseminated during the regular school year can provide suggestions for topics and other essential information for future training efforts. However, assessing the effectiveness of the training program should be more outcome-based. The retention rate of undecided students, the number of students who actually choose a major within a reasonable amount of time, and student utilization of various campus facilities, can provide important information about the practical effects of training programs. Tracking undecided students from entry to graduation can provide "hard" data to administrators about the success of an overall program, of which training is a critical element.

Summary

The training of advisers to work with undecided students is essential. Setting objectives, choosing relevant topics, using productive training methods and materials, and developing an effective evaluation component are all necessary elements for a successful training program. In addition, attempts should be made to incorporate rewards and recognition for advisers who are participating in the training efforts. When faculty and staff participate in professional development activities everyone benefits, including the student, the adviser, and the institution.

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Chapter 11

Evaluating Advising Programs for Undecided Students

Elizabeth G. Creamer

As is the case in most areas in higher education, the gap is wide between the literature advocating the virtues of evaluating academic advising and current practice. No more than 50% of the respondents to a national survey on academic advising conducted by the American College Testing program (ACT) in 1979, 1983, 1987, and 1992 reported conducting regular program evaluation (Carstensen & Silberhorn, 1979; Crockett & Levitz, 1983; Habley, 1988; Habley, 1993). Even though a faculty-based model of academic advising continues to be the model most frequently used, the majority of institutions do not account for advising effectiveness in promotion and tenure decisions (Habley, 1993).

The failure of institutions to reward academic advising may be related to a failure to define what constitutes good advising, as well as to uncertainty about how to measure it. Without effective systems to evaluate academic advising, there is little evidence to support the contribution of academic advising to student learning and development. In addition there is little research to support the role that academic advising plays in student retention, development, and achievement (Carstensen & Silberhorn, 1979). Documentation of this relationship is particularly critical in periods of economic retrenchment when the very future of many academic support services, including academic advising, can be threatened.

There are many areas in which evaluation can be used to make decisions about advising programs. Typical goals of evaluation include determining the effectiveness of the advising system, evaluating and rewarding individual advisers, identifying areas for in-service training, and supporting requests for increased administrative support (Crockett, 1988). All are ultimately used to enhance the effectiveness of advising. The *CAS Standards and Guidelines for Academic Advising*, developed by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (1988) explicitly address the requirement for systematic evaluation and regular research about advising programs "to determine whether the educational goals and the needs of students are being met" (1988, p. 26).

The focus of an evaluation of advisers or advising programs in academic departments is likely to differ significantly from the evaluation of advising programs designed for students who have not solidified their commitment to a major. The evaluation of an advising program for undecided students is likely to address student development outcomes and to focus on goals related to assisting students in making decisions, clarifying goals, and developing educational plans that are consistent with their skills and interests as a measure of program effectiveness.

There are multiple explanations for the failure of the majority of institutions to develop strategies to conduct systematic evaluations of their advising programs. Lack of resources and time are at the top of the list. Confusion about the difference between research and evaluation and lack of knowledge about ways to assess student outcomes are also on the list of reasons. Hesitancy to depend exclusively on data collected from students, as well as past failures to translate the information collected in the evaluation process to an action plan, are additional reasons for a lack of enthusiasm for conducting program evaluations.

This chapter will focus on the evaluation of advising programs for undecided students and student development outcomes and issues. The purpose of this chapter is not to suggest that there is a single approach to conducting program evaluation, but to describe briefly a number of approaches to conducting an evaluation of an advising program for undecided students. The strategies suggested offer alternatives to supplement frequently used evaluative measures, such as student satisfaction and number of students served. The discussion about evaluating programs for undecided students begins by suggesting four possible foci for an evaluation. Secondly, a variety of methods or strategies to conduct evaluations with each of the different foci is suggested. Finally, examples of the results that can be expected from different types of evaluations will be discussed.

Definitions

Some of the hesitancy to conduct program evaluation can be attributed to confusion about the difference between evaluation and research, as well as between evaluation and outcomes assessment.

Evaluation

Regardless of the methods used, program evaluation is fundamentally a process of conducting an assessment of value, merit, or worth (Kuh, 1979). Evaluation is value-laden, rather than value-free, because there is an explicit concern with the purposes or values of the program (Hanson, 1978).

In addition to the concern for value or worth, evaluation differs from research in that it is context-bound. The value of an evaluation is in the relevance and utility of the information collected in a particular setting, not in its generalizability to other settings. The purposes of evaluation are clearly pragmatic (Hanson, 1978).

There are a number of major models for the evaluation of educational programs. Pace and Friedlander (1978) identified four models of evaluation that use different criteria to judge program effectiveness. These are summarized in Table 1.

Comprehensive evaluation plans are likely to include a variety of ways to assess program worth or merit such as assessing student outcomes, comparing achievement to intended objectives or goals, evaluating the performance of individual advisers, and examining the accountability or cost effectiveness of a specific delivery method.

Table 1
Models of Program Effectiveness

Model	Criteria
Educational Psychology	The success of the program in meeting intended objectives.
Educational Decision	Informationabout differences between expected and actual results is used to make decisions about whether to continue, terminate, or modify a program.
Educational Science	An assessment of what student development is attributable to the program.
Educational Change	The extent of individual change and institutional improvement.

Another major way to distinguish types of evaluation is to determine if they are formative or summative in nature. A formative evaluation in advising is likely to focus on the question: What can we do to improve the advising system or the adviser (Brown & Sanstead, 1982)? A summative evaluation of an advising program is likely to focus on the question: Which is the better approach to advising (Brown & Anstead, 1982)? Formative evaluations tend to be ongoing, while summative evaluations generally occur annually. Only formative evaluations are likely to capture unintended consequences of advising programs. A comprehensive program evaluation is likely to include both formative and summative elements.

Research

The purposes of research and evaluation clearly differ. While evaluation is concerned with making a judgment about whether a program is succeeding, research is concerned with why a program succeeds (Kuh, 1979). Research is often used to test theory and to generate knowledge that is generalizable across multiple settings, while evaluation has the practical intent of seeking to improve program effectiveness in a specific setting.

Although the purposes of research and evaluation differ markedly, the methods do not. According to Hanson (1978),

> Good evaluation, like good science, utilizes measurement and observation that are accurate, reliable, and valid, gathers evidence systematically, and analyzes results objectively. (p. 9)

Comprehensive evaluations are likely to use both quantitative and qualitative strategies.

Outcomes Assessment

The terms *outcomes assessment* and *evaluation* are often used interchangeably. Outcomes assessment is concerned with the effects or impact of an educational program or intervention on the participants. Outcomes assessment activities assess program effectiveness through student learning and development. Because of the explicit focus on student development, particularly the clarification of occupational identity, outcomes assessment is very likely to be a central part of the evaluation strategy for advising programs for undecided students. Evaluation, on the other hand, is the more appropriate term to describe the process of program review when a wider array of measures is used to assess program effectiveness.

Developmental outcomes of academic service programs include behavior, knowledge, attitudes, values, and/or skills (Winston & Miller, in press). Evaluations of advising programs for undecided students are likely to consider both affective and cognitive outcomes that are directly related to the advising process. Affective outcomes include attitudes and values; cognitive outcomes include knowledge acquisition and decision making. Affective outcomes directly related to the goals of programs for undecided students are likely to include measures of levels of decidedness about choice of major and careers. Cognitive outcomes sought by these programs might include knowledge about a variety of careers and increased awareness of the skills and personal qualities associated with different occupations. These outcomes can be measured by data that are either psychological or behavioral. Behavioral measures are easily observable, such as the development of an educational plan. Psychological measures, such as satisfaction with an adviser, are less observable and generally measured through tests or instruments such as surveys.

Four Foci for Program Evaluation

Although each program can be examined in its own right, the overall effectiveness of an advising program for undecided students can be investigated by focusing the inquiry on one or more aspects of the program. These are (a) the overall program, (b) a specific program intervention, (c) advisers, or (d) student outcomes.

There is overlap among the categories in sources of data and methods utilized. Establishing the focus of the evaluation is in itself a value judgement; it is a statement about what aspects of the program are considered to be of most value.

Table 2 provides examples of the types of questions that might be used to shape formative and summative evaluations of the different aspects of advising programs for undecided students. Summative evaluations are likely to involve judgments about the effectiveness of a program, intervention, or adviser. Formative evaluations are likely to be concerned with identifying ways to improve effectiveness in each of the four areas.

Overall Program Review

There are a number of ways to measure the worth of a program. Worth can be measured relative to (a) the impact of the program on participants, (b) established goals, (c) other programs, or (d) established standards (Brown, 1979). A summative evaluation of the effectiveness of an advising program for undecided students is likely to focus on a judgment about how the program compares to established goals, other programs, or standards. A self-study might shape a formative evaluation that is likely to focus on developing ways to improve program effectiveness to meet standards.

One way to measure the worth of an advising program for undecided students is to use the standards developed by the Council for the Advancement of Standards [CAS] for Higher Education (CAS, 1988). These standards list ten institutional goals for academic advising which were based on eight goals for advising programs submitted by the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA). Institutional goals for academic advising programs established by CAS are the following:

1. Clarification of life and career goals;

Table 2
Examples of Questions to Frame Formative and Summative Evaluations of Advising Programs for Undecided Students

		Type of Evaluation	
Area of Focus	Sample Questions	Formative	Summative
Overall Program	Is this program effective in meeting the goals for academic advising articulated by the CAS Standards?		X
	How can this program become more effective in meeting the goals for academic advising articulated by the CAS Standards?	X	
	What impact does the advising program have on other student services and the wider community?		X
A Specific Program Intervention	Is one delivery system more effective than another in facilitating student development?		X
	How can the delivery system be made more efficient?		X
Advisors	How effective is an individual advisor?		X
	In what areas can an individual advisor work to be more effective?	X	

2. Development of suitable educational plans;
3. Selection of appropriate course and other educational experiences;
4. Interpretation of institutional requirements;
5. Increasing student awareness of educational resources available;
6. Evaluation of student progress toward established goals;
7. Development of decision-making skills;
8. Reinforcement of student self-direction;
9. Referral to and use of other institutional and community support services, where appropriate; and
10. Collecting and distributing student data regarding student needs, preferences, and performance for use in institutional policy making. (1988, p. 21)

These goals provide a guideline for self-assessment of the overall effectiveness of an advising program, as well as a method to compare different programs. They also can be used to conduct formative evaluations by providing a way for program administrators to identify areas for improvement and staff development.

Specific Program Interventions

Judgments about the effectiveness of an advising program also can be made through an examination of the outcomes of specific program interventions, such as a workshop on values clarification or a pilot program using different strategies to deliver advising.

Summative evaluations of different kinds of interventions are likely to compare the outcomes of several different delivery models in order to reach a judgment about which is the most effective and/or efficient or which accounts for the greatest amount of change among participants. In this case, instruments are likely to be developed locally. A formative evaluation would be more concerned with identifying ways to structure the intervention to be more effective.

Individual Advisers

A third way to evaluate the effectiveness of an advising program for undecided students is to evaluate the effectiveness of individual advisers. Central to the establishment of meaningful evaluation of advisers is the question, "What constitutes good advising?" (Crockett, 1988, p. 185). Some models, mostly derived from work by members of NACADA, are available that identify the qualities of a good academic adviser (Crockett, 1988). A number of standardized instruments are available to collect student perceptions about their advisers (Srebnik, 1988).

Adviser's responsibilities have at least two major dimensions: a counseling or advising role and an information or administrative role (Kelley & Lynch, 1991; Trombley, 1984). Most student surveys that evaluate advisers generally focus on the advising process and assess how satisfied students are with the behaviors or characteristics of academic advisers (Srebnik, 1988) that would be expected in any advising setting. These qualities or traits can be categorized into three dimensions: availability, knowledge, and helpfulness. Some of the items in the dimensions, such as availability, probably do not vary by the mission or focus of the advising program. Items in the evaluation of advisers' performance on other dimensions such as knowledge and helpfulness can be written to focus on issues that are central to programs for undecided students.

The major dimensions of the advising process and some items that might be included in an evaluation of individual adviser in a program for undecided students are:

1. *Knowledge.* Gathers accurate and timely information about the requirements of

different majors, related careers, and application of transfer requirements. Utilizes computerized information systems and other available sources of student information.

2. *Availability.* Is accessible to students, maintains scheduled office hours, and meets scheduled appointments.

3. *Helpfulness.* Expresses an interest or concern for the individual, while simultaneously encouraging self- reliance and responsibility. Makes accurate and helpful referrals and facilitates accurate self-assessment about skills and interests. Provides an opportunity to clarify career and life goals. Increases student awareness of educational resources.

Academic advisers also have administrative responsibilities that cannot generally be assessed by students. An evaluation of the administrative responsibilities of an adviser might consider:

1. *Professional judgment.* Maintain confidentiality and exercise discretion about the opinions voiced to students, particularly about other faculty members or advisers. Assist students with appropriate grievance and appeal processes. Adhere to standards of conduct promulgated by professional associations on treating students equitably and without bias regarding gender, race, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

2. *Advocacy.* Serve as an advocate for students and for advising. Recognize the needs of diverse student populations.

3. *Professional development.* Pursue activities to ensure ongoing professional renewal and enhancement. Consult with other advisers.

Many of the elements of the administrative dimension of an evaluation of individual advisers can be found in the *Statement of Core Values of Academic Advising* (Frank & Rubner, 1993).

Student Outcomes

Another way to measure the worth of a program is to assess its impact on participants (Brown, 1979). Although the relationship is not always a direct one, the research literature has documented the connection between career counseling and academic advising and a number of affective and cognitive outcomes (Astin, 1993). These include the following:

Cognitive outcomes:

- persistence
- educational aspirations
- academic achievement
- career decisions

Affective outcomes:

- satisfaction with the overall college experience
- satisfaction with support services
- satisfaction with faculty
- satisfaction with curriculum and instruction
- satisfaction with general education
- requirements
- trust in the administration

Career counseling was found to be positively associated with self-reported gains in the following areas: analytical and problem-solving skills, writing skills, leadership abilities, preparation for graduate or professional school, and job-related skills (Astin, 1993).

Another way to assess the outcomes of advising programs for undecided students is to use the *CAS Standards* to identify cognitive and affective outcomes that are sought and then to develop local instruments or strategies to measure them (CAS, 1988). Student development goals for advising programs outlined in these standards involve cognitive outcomes that include developing decision-making skills, developing an educational plan, and evaluating progress toward established goals and educational plans. Affective outcomes that can be used to evaluate advising programs include clarification of life and career goals and developing self-understanding and acceptance.

Although outcomes assessment has become a widely used strategy to evaluate educational programs, it is not without its critics or criticisms. Brown and Sanstead (1982) contend that the tendency to utilize outcome measures exclusively is a major weakness of program evaluations. Outcome assessment, they argue, often utilizes global outcomes, such as retention and academic performance, which are influenced by a plethora of factors in the environment, including but not restricted to academic advising. A solitary focus on outcome assessment as an evaluative strategy also tends to overlook student input variables, such as expectations, motivation, and effort.

Table 3
Data Sources for Evaluations of Programs for Undecided Students

Area of Focus	Methods
Overall Program	ACT Academic Advising Audit (Crockett, 1987) CAS Academic Advising Self Assessment Guide (CAS, 1988) student use measures surveys of student satisfaction with services needs assessment focus group interviews alumni surveys The Academic Advising Inventory (Winston & Sandor, 1985) ACT Survey of Academic Advising external consultants
A Specific Program Intervention	surveys of student satisfaction student use measures focus group interviews
Advisors	ACT Survey of Academic Advising self-assessment instruments analysis of time devoted to specific tasks The Academic Advising Inventory (Winston Sandor, 1985) supervisory review peer review
Student Outcomes	logs or diaries kept by students in-depth case studies of individual students focus group interviews alumni surveys survey of employers The Developmental Advising Inventory (Dickson & Thayer, 1993)

Methods for Evaluating Programs for Undecided Students

Data sources that can be used to evaluate an advising program for undecided students are presented in Table 3. Many of the sources can be used to help evaluate each of the four program foci: the overall program, a specific intervention, individual advisers, or student outcomes. Only standardized instruments that focus on student development outcomes directly related to advising are listed. Findings from multiple, locally developed instruments can also be found in the literature.

Methods for Evaluating the Overall Advising Program

A number of methods can be used to conduct overall program reviews. These are (a) surveys or questionnaires, (b) campus task force or self-study group, (c) naturalistic methods, and (d) external consultants.

Survey or questionnaires. The most common method of evaluating advising programs is through the use of student surveys or questionnaires. Although these are often locally developed, there are a number of standardized instruments that offer the advantage of providing national norms with which local findings can be compared.

For instance, the *ACT Survey of Academic Advising* has been administered to about 45,000 students from 102 colleges. The key sections in the survey relevant to this discussion are the following:

- *Section II: Advising Information.* In addition to general information about the adviser, students are asked to assess how well the advising system overall meets their needs.

- *Section III: Academic Advising Needs.* Students are asked to indicate if they have discussed each of 18 topics with an adviser and to assess the extent they were satisfied with the adviser's assistance.

- *Section IV: Impressions of Your Adviser.* In this section, students are asked to what extent they agree with 36 items that describe adviser traits. Most of the items in this section fall under the categories identified earlier in this chapter: knowledge, availability, and helpfulness.

- *Section VI: Additional Questions.* This section provides an opportunity for an institution to include up to 30 additional questions that are tailored to concerns that are specific to the institution.

Campus task force or self-study group. Two instruments are available to guide a self-study of the organization and delivery of an advising program: the *ACT Academic Advising Audit* (Crockett, 1987) and the *CAS Academic Advising Self Assessment Guide* (CAS, 1988). The *CAS Standards* (CAS, 1988) are used as the basis for both instruments.

Using the *CAS Academic Advising Self Assessment Guide*, an advising program is evaluated through self-rankings on the extent to which current advising practices are in compliance or non-compliance with over 80 program standards in nine different functional areas (CAS, 1988). Functional areas include mission, organization and administration, human resources, funding, and facilities. Members of the self-study committee then must document the support of the evaluation, describe discrepancies in detail, and develop an action plan required in order to be in compliance with the standard.

The *ACT Academic Advising Audit* (Crockett, 1987) provides another format to guide a self-study of an advising program. Institutions rank their advising program in terms of the goals defined by NACADA and used in the *CAS Standards* (CAS, 1988). Results from this self-assessment can be compared to national data on the same items from similar types of institutions reported in the results from three of the four national ACT surveys of academic advising practices (Crockett & Levitz, 1983; Habley, 1988; Habley, 1993).

Naturalistic methods. Although evaluations have traditionally relied on quantitative methods, a number of qualitative and naturalistic methods are also highly appropriate for evaluating a process as complex as academic advising. Naturalistic methods involve data collection strategies, such as interviews and focus groups, that provide an opportunity for interaction between the evaluator and the client or customer. These evaluations generally have a formative rather than summative focus. The intent is to collect information that is useful in a specific context or setting, rather than data that might be generalizable to other settings. Naturalistic methods are as concerned with how the experience and outcomes of an advising program, adviser, or specific advising intervention differ among students as they are in finding commonalities.

A number of qualitative methods can be used to collect information to help evaluate an advising program for undecided students. Kramer (1992), for instance, used homogeneous focus groups of between three and fifteen students who met with a trained moderator to respond to predetermined questions about the utility of advising and orientation materials. Focus groups can be used to ask students to assess gains in student development outcomes, such as decision-making skills, and what connections, if any, they perceive between those gains and the advising services they have received. Such focus groups also can be used to collect specific suggestions about ways to improve advising services and/or areas of concern that are not being addressed.

Several additional qualitative approaches to evaluation of advising services for undecided students can provide valuable information about program effectiveness. Although requiring a significant long-term investment of time, in-depth case studies describing individual student's development along specific dimensions related to identity and occupational decidedness are one way to document the outcomes of advising programs for undecided students. Students can also be asked to write about experiences they have had in advising that contributed to their development. Finally, an analysis of a version of a developmental transcript that records a chronological history of a student's involvement in experiences designed to clarify career certainty, such as volunteer work and internships, is another relatively sophisticated way to assess the effectiveness of advising programs for undecided students using qualitative methods.

External consultants. The use of external consultants to provide an overall evaluation of a program is a relatively common practice. NACADA's Consultants Bureau can be contacted for ready referrals to the names of professionals with experience in conducting program reviews.

Methods for Conducting Evaluations of Individual Advisers

Four primary methods of evaluating advisers are utilized: student evaluation, self-evaluation, supervisory performance review, and peer review (Habley, 1993). Student evaluations and supervisory performance evaluations are the most commonly used. Peer evaluation is the least frequently used method of evaluation for advisers (Habley, 1993).

Student evaluations. Although a multitude of instruments probably exist at the institutional level, Srebnik (1988) provides a list of twelve student surveys to evaluate advisers that includes both standardized and nonstandardized instruments. Among standardized instruments, the *ACT Survey of Academic Advising* which has already been summarized, includes a section called "Impression of Your Advisor" to collect student perceptions about the availability, knowledge, and helpfulness of advisers.

An additional standardized instrument that is available to evaluate individual advisers is the *Academic Advising Inventory* (AAI) (Winston & Sandor, 1984). In the first section of the survey, students are asked to describe the nature of the advising relationship along a continuum from prescriptive to developmental. In the second section of the survey, students indicate the frequency which certain activities, such as "discussing possible majors/academic concentrations," have occurred in advising sessions during the academic year. In the third part of the survey, students evaluate their overall satisfaction with academic advising.

Peer review or supervisory performance evaluation. The published instruments generally, if not exclusively, use students as the source of data to evaluate individual advisers and consider elements of the general advising process, such as knowledge, availability, and helpfulness. Other elements of an individual adviser's role, such as the administrative element identified by Trombley (1984), are more appropriately approached by other methods, such as supervisory performance review or peer performance review.

The effectiveness of individual advisers on elements of the administrative dimension can be evaluated by using the standards of conduct developed by professional associations, such as those drafted by NACADA in a *Statement of Core Values for Academic Advising* (Frank & Rubner, 1993). Although this document is primarily designed to define the values and beliefs that underlie practice, essential roles for advisers are implicit. Some major dimensions and their elements were described earlier in this chapter.

Methods for Evaluating Specific Program Interventions

Most of the methods designed to evaluate specific program interventions are locally designed. These evaluations may utilize either traditional qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis, or they may use some naturalistic methods that have already been described. Recipients of the ACT/NACADA outstanding program awards are a source of information about innovative programs in academic advising.

Strategies for Assessing Student Outcomes

There are a variety of both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess student outcomes and their relationship to academic advising. Although strategies for conducting assessment of student outcomes (such as the review of a portfolio of a graduating senior by a team of faculty) involve observable, behavioral measures, most strategies depend on students' self- reported gains in areas such as critical thinking, analytical abilities, or decision-making skills.

The *Developmental Advising Inventory* (DAI) is one standardized instrument that has explicit application to academic advising programs for undecided students (Dickson & Thayer, 1993). The DAI can be used as part of a strategy for self-assessment and goal setting. Students are asked to assess their development on nine dimensions, to indicate their satisfaction with their development, and whether or not they would like to discuss a particular item with an adviser. The nine dimensions are intellectual, life planning, social, physical, emotional, sexual, cultural, spiritual, and political. The life planning dimension includes questions that are directly relevant to a program for undecided students. This instrument could be used as a data source for a formative evaluation or needs assessment.

Benefits of Comprehensive Evaluations of Advising Programs

The primary purpose of evaluations is to provide information for decision making about the advising program (Brown & Sanstead, 1982). Information gathered from program evaluations is likely to be one element, but not the only element, in decisions about advising programs. These decisions fall in one of two categories. The first category is composed of making decisions about how to improve the advising program, the effectiveness of an individual adviser, or a specific program intervention. Such evaluations tend to be formative. A second category is comprised of decisions involving choices between programs or interventions. Decisions of this type tend to be based on data collected in summative evaluations (Brown & Sanstead, 1982). Example of the types of benefits that might accrue from both summative and formative evaluations at different elements of an advising program for undecided students are shown in Table 4.

The outcomes in Table 4 are not comprehensive nor necessarily restricted to the program category listed. Some of the outcomes, such as information to "support requests for administrative support," apply to more than one category. Although it is more likely that administrators would choose to design an evaluation strategy by first identifying a focus and then selecting a method that suites the context, it is also possible to reverse the process and use this table to identify a desired outcome and then to select a focus of a program evaluation and appropriate strategies.

Conclusion

The failure of the majority of institutions to evaluate and reward academic advising systematically has been an ongoing concern among members of the advising profession. This failure has been attributed to two interrelated factors: the failure of institutions to define what constitutes good advising and the failure to identify ways to measure it. Although not readily available, models exist that identify the critical elements of both outstanding advisers and advising programs. Any definition of good advising must recognize that the task is multi-faceted and far more complex than is suggested by the traditional prescriptive view of advising as helping with course selection.

Due primarily to the effort of professional organizations, including CAS and NACADA,

Table 4
Outcomes of Evaluations of Advising Programs for Undecided Students by Area of Focus

Area of Focus	Outcomes	Type of Evaluation	
		Formative	Summative
Overall Program	-support requests for administrative support		X
	-enhance visibility within the institution		X
	-guide long range-planning	X	
	-refine program goals and objectives	X	
	-team-building	X	
	-provide measures of accountability		X
	-clarify decisions to establish, modify, or eliminate a program		X
A Specific Program Intervention	-provide data about specific strategies that contribute to student development		X
Advisors	-identify areas for staff development	X	
	-guide training activities	X	
	-identify advising award recipients		X
	-assist personnel decisions, such as promotions		X
	-guide personal goal setting	X	
Student Outcomes	-assist in curriculum development	X	
	-identify the outcomes of advising programs		X
	-identify areas of students' deficiencies		X
	-identify students' developmental concerns		X
	-identify issues students would like to discuss with an advisor	X	

strides have been made in reaching a consensus about the definition of what constitutes good advising and good advisers. Traditional evaluative strategies, such as measures of student use and satisfaction, generally fail to address broader developmental issues, focus only on intended goals, and may overlook substantive dimensions of an adviser's roles, such as the administrative aspects.

The quality of program evaluation is ultimately judged by the utility and timeliness of the information gathered and whether this information contributes to decision making that leads to enhancement of the program, specific program interventions, and/or of the skills and effectiveness of individual advisers. When the act of evaluation is extended in this manner, it becomes a form of organizational or system intervention that can be an important tool to help facilitate institutional change and improvement.

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Chapter 12

Exemplary Advising Programs for Undecided Students

Mary Stuart Hunter and Dean Harwood

Whether they have an opportunity to acknowledge it or not, undecided students can be found at every institution of higher education. They may range from first-year students who have not made an initial decision about an academic major to upperclass students having second thoughts about the major they initially chose. A wide range of institutional approaches to address this phenomenon also is present — from complete denial that undecided students exist, to fully-supported, well-developed programs for these students. Effective programmatic approaches to address the unique characteristics and needs of undecided students take many forms and reflect institutional characteristics. The common features of successful institutional programs, however, include (a) the belief that undecided students are contributing members of the student population, (b) acknowledgment of career planning as an important student development process, and (c) involvement of faculty members in the delivery of services and information.

Many institutions have outstanding programs for undecided students. Those described in this chapter represent the quality and variety of such programs with respect to delivery systems, services, and budgetary support levels.

Providence College

Providence College is a private, Catholic, coeducational institution of approximately 3,600 students located in Providence, Rhode Island. In recent years, Providence has seen a significant increase in incoming students who have not declared academic majors. In an effort to embrace these students, the college has instituted a program that eliminates the stigma of not having a major and provides support, information and time, so that these students can make informed decisions.

The key component in Providence College's program for undecided students is summer orientation. In addition to orientation sessions for new students enrolled in specific departments, there is a special orientation program for undeclared students. Just as important, there is a concurrent orientation program for parents of undecided students.

During the orientation program for undecided students, Providence begins the process of helping them decide upon a major. This first step is one in which students are introduced to the process of major decision making. All new students are assigned a faculty adviser with whom they work both individually and in a small-group setting. The adviser provides the student with an overview of academic requirements, majors, and academic programs. Along with the traditional advising activities of assisting with registration and selection of courses, the adviser also introduces the student to the career development process at Providence. Care is taken not to present career development issues to students too early.

Emphasis is on the self-assessment process that will establish the foundation for sound academic and career decisions. Since Providence does not require its students to select majors until the end of the sophomore year, the adviser-advisee relationship is maintained until a major is selected.

Unique to the Providence program is a separate orientation for parents of undecided students. This program is intended to demonstrate to parents that it is normal and acceptable for first-year students to explore academic options before declaring a major. Parents are shown how the career development process works so they are aware of the type of assistance that will be provided during this period. This program eliminates much of the stress on parents when their children cannot make an initial decision and provides the student the time to explore many options without pressure from home.

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University of Connecticut

The University of Connecticut has no official university program for undecided students. Instead, various departments collaborate to assist these students. This collaboration is coordinated by the Department of Career Programs within the Division of Student Affairs and Services. A crucial component of Connecticut's efforts with undecided students is the Major Center. The Major Center is a self-help, self-paced program within the Department of Career Programs. At the heart of the program is a four-step decision-making procedure. First, students take part in a self-assessment and information-gathering procedure. This process allows the students to learn as much as possible about themselves, the programs being offered by the university, and career choices. Among the tools used to conduct this self assessment are self-assessment worksheets, a computerized system for self-exploration and career opportunities (DISCOVER), a self-administered inventory to provide some career guidance (the "Self-Directed Search" by Holland), and an extensive library of videotapes created at the University of Connecticut to provide information on the various academic departments and their offerings. The students then make an appointment with a career counselor to discuss their concerns. The Department of Career Programs also has an excellent relationship with many of the faculty and can provide students with a directory of faculty members who are willing to speak to them about their academic options.

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Fort Valley State College

At Fort Valley State College, a unit of the University System of Georgia, undecided students get special treatment. They are encouraged to explore the many opportunities available to them before they make a final decision about a major. The Counseling and Career Development Center provides a specially trained adviser for undecided students. This adviser helps the undecided student understand how specific majors relate to career paths and provides connections for the student to research a variety of career opportunities. Undecided students at Fort Valley State are treated with a great deal of respect and are nurtured as they progress through the decision-making process. One of the unique programs for undecided students at Fort Valley State is the use of their freshman orientation course. Personal Orientation 101 is the freshman seminar course designed for freshmen who have declared a major. It provides a history of Fort Valley State, an orientation to campus, and an introduction to study skills for college. For undecided students, Personal Orientation 102 is available. This course presents much of the same material as the 101 course, but also introduces the career decision-making process and teaches techniques and skills to assist students in making career and educational choices.

The combination of the Personal Orientation 102 course, the efforts of the Counseling and Career Development Center, and the overall philosophy toward undecided students provides a varied and comprehensive approach.

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Southwest State University

Southwest State University in Minnesota has developed an Advising Center to coordinate advising for all incoming students. For students who have decided on a major, this process simply connects students with a faculty adviser in the selected department. For undecided students the process is more involved.

Southwest State matches a volunteer faculty adviser to each student in the summer prior to the start of classes, and this relationship continues until the student declares a major. When the first summer contact is made, adviser and student become acquainted, and the advising process is explained. Students are assisted in planning their schedules and are provided with information about majors. Volunteer faculty advisers are given special training opportunities to learn how to assist this special student population. They are taught how to advise the general studies requirements of the school, how to read a student's placement file, and how to interpret ACT scores.

Two significant events are also part of Southwest State's program for undecided students. A "Select Your Major Night" is designed to bring undecided students together with faculty members from all departments to allow for an exchange of ideas and information. This program has provided the impetus for many students to decide on a major. In addition, the "Career Planning" program is provided in conjunction with the Career Placement Office. While both of these programs are open to all students, the primary audience is the undecided group.

Southwest State has also begun to experiment with other ways to assist undecided students, for example, a computerized student record system and class clusters. While each of the special programs plays a part in the overall design for undecided students, the success of the Advising Center depends on the commitment and efforts of volunteer faculty members who provide one-on-one counseling.

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Millersville University

Millersville University provides a comprehensive service for undecided students with very little cost to the university. The program at Millersville consists of one individual with a quarter-time release to coordinate the program, a part-time secretary, a $6000 budget, and over 90 volunteer advisers. While this program does not have a formal structure in the university, it is perceived as important and has great impact.

The Undecided Program began in 1986 with 15 volunteer advisers and 10 undecided students. Since that time the program has grown to over 220 undecided students and 90 volunteer advisers. The list of advisers includes a wide variety of individuals from the Millersville community. These include student affairs professionals, faculty members, and retirees. The ratio of volunteers to students is three to one. These volunteers provide a very personalized service to the students through letter-writing and other individualized contacts. In addition to assisting the undecided students, this volunteer program has provided an opportunity for members of the campus community to network with each other, creating a sense of cooperation throughout the university.

Advisement tools created for this program include materials that help students assess their goals and a series of videotapes created at Millersville on the various majors and individual departments on campus. A list of contacts in each department is also provided so that a receptive individual is available to help students explore their options. Statistics indicate that over 60% of the students enrolling as undecided students eventually graduate from Millersville University.

By using existing resources and harnessing the commitment of volunteers, Millersville provides an excellent example of how colleges and universities can provide special services to undecided students on a limited budget.

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The Ohio State University

The Ohio State University has had an extensive and well-defined program for undecided students for over 25 years. Ohio State's program provides undecided students the opportunity to explore a wide variety of academic and career options before making final decisions. Undecided students, like other entering first-year students, are enrolled in Ohio State's University College in a special curricular program, the General Baccalaureate Curriculum. During orientation all undecided students are assigned a generalist adviser who helps them understand the academic programs of the university. The student and adviser continue to work together until a decision is made. About one-fifth of all entering students at Ohio State enroll in this program.

Also, during the orientation program, parents of undecided students attend a special session where they are informed of the university's efforts to assist their students in exploring many academic options within a highly structured program. This session provides the opportunity for parents to ask questions and reassures them that their students will receive the type of advising and counseling that leads to rational and satisfying educational and career decisions.

University College has created a wide variety of resources to assist undecided students in their educational and career exploration. For undecided students, a specially designed version of the freshman orientation course required of all students is described in Chapter 6. Students integrate the information they have gathered about themselves with academic and career information within the course structure. Since their adviser is the instructor in the course, they continue to work together after the course is completed until a major is chosen.

University College has a resource center where several computerized career information systems are available. Other resources in the center include specially designed printed materials, paper and pencil tests, career and major videotapes, and a small career library. While these resources are available to all students, the advisers of undecided students refer their advisees to the center for more in-depth assistance.

Two other resources available to undecided students are "people-banks." The "Partners In Education" program connects students with alumni who have volunteered to share their expertise in over 200 career fields. The "Senior Bank" is composed of Ohio State seniors from many academic departments who have volunteered to discuss with exploring students the most important aspects of majoring in a specific field.

Other campus resources are also used to assist undecided students including career counseling, larger career library resources, and several career exploration credit courses which can provide more in-depth academic and career exploration. Ohio State has a long history of affirming that undecided students are important to a large university and takes pride in the numbers of undecided students who have succeeded in graduating from a large number of majors.

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Memorial University of Newfoundland

Memorial University of Newfoundland has taken academic advising into the high school. The Academic Advising Centre begins to make contact with students in Level I (Grade 10) of high school to encourage them to consider their future and what role a university education can play in that future. Later, representatives of the university return to visit students in Level III (Grade 12) of high school to provide more detailed information about courses and programs available at Memorial. University instructors visit each school to interview all high school students intending to enter Memorial to help them formulate programs for their first year of studies. The Centre also provides publications and computer software for guidance counselors to involve them in helping students decide on academic majors.

Students who arrive at Memorial without declaring a major are assigned one of their instructors as a faculty adviser through the Academic Advising Centre. The Centre also acts as a repository for information that can be used to assist students in making a decision. Computer programs, brochures, and publications about available academic programs, as well as videotapes describing academic programs are available in the Academic Advising Centre.

The Centre also maintains communication with first-year students through a newsletter providing a wide variety of information on the services and opportunities available on campus.

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The University of Utah

The University of Utah began to take a closer look at advising undeclared students as the result of a unique problem. In 1991, almost 20% of juniors and seniors were still undeclared or in pre-major status. This situation prompted the university to seek changes in how undecided students are handled and in the time they needed to declare a major. The university solved this problem with a two-pronged approach. First, all undergraduates are expected to declare a major by the end of their sophomore year. Those who fail to do so have their registration placed on hold. To clear the hold, students must make contact with an academic adviser.

The second part of the solution was to create a comprehensive advising program to assist students with major and career exploration. The orientation program was adjusted to provide separate workshops for undecided students. In these workshops the institution encourages freshmen to use their first year to explore their opportunities and to resist making premature decisions about a major. The emphasis on making a decision is not provided until the sophomore year when undecided students are required to declare a major and given information about workshops and personal advising to assist them.

Utah has also developed coordination among the various offices on campus directly concerned with undecided students. The Center for Academic Advising, the Counseling Center, and the Career Center closely coordinate their activities to provide undecided students with the information they need to select a major.

Training and staff development of the individuals involved in advising are other major components of Utah's program. Advisers are provided a training manual to assist them in working with undecided students, and a half-day workshop has been implemented to provide more intensive training for these advisers. The University of Utah is continually evaluating the success of the program through the use of a variety of instruments and is seeking ways to continue to meet the needs of its students.

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Shippensburg University

Shippensburg University has created the Division of Undeclared Majors to influence the lives of undecided students positively. Students who start in this division have the opportunity to explore their options without the pressure of prematurely declaring a major.

The Division of Undeclared Majors provides both individual and group counseling. Volunteer faculty members serve as advisers to undecided students, providing individual counseling. Adviser and student meet in the fall before classes begin to discuss the student's goals. An "Exploration and Planning Seminar," which is a self-awareness, career-oriented course, provides the opportunity for students to discuss their options with peers. The division also provides referrals and self-directed, computer-based career guidance.

The division has implemented an early warning system to identify undeclared students who are in danger of failing academically. This program offers the opportunity for the student, with her or his adviser, to take steps to ensure that success is possible at Shippensburg.

Over the years the Division of Undeclared Majors has continually sought ways to upgrade and update its services. Advisers are provided with frequent opportunities to improve their advising skills and to participate in personal/professional development activities.

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Bradley University

The Academic Exploration Program (AEP) was developed in 1977 for undecided students. It is conceptually based in student development theory. Three basic components are incorporated into the AEP program: diagnostic, student development, and academic. The diagnostic component seeks to analyze student ability levels, interest patterns and personality traits in an attempt to match students with career and academic majors that are challenging and appropriate. The student development component begins with a required non-credit course, the "Student Planning Seminar" (AEP 100). (See description in Chapter 6.)

The academic component is delivered through faculty volunteers in a wide variety of disciplines that coincide with Holland's categories. During orientation, AEP students are interviewed, and their basic area of interest is assessed. Faculty advisers are assigned at the beginning of the academic year based on those interests. Truly "undecided" students are assigned to professional advisers who work with them until their interests develop or change.

The Academic Exploration Program also receives students who are admissible to the institution, but may have one or more deficits that prevent them from entering their first choice of major (e.g., students who wish to major in business but have yet to complete calculus). With this intermediate step between admission and major declaration, students who might otherwise drop out because of course/grade deficiencies are redirected to other majors in which they can be successful.

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Common Features in Model Programs

Each of the model programs described above has its own unique characteristics, but a common thread runs through them all—a positive and upbeat approach to student development through programs for undecided students. Each institutional approach features a positive philosophy about being undeclared; emphasizes the need to help students gather, interpret, and use information about themselves, majors and related careers; and involves faculty members in the delivery of programs and services.

Each successful program aims to remove the stigma of being undecided, and the institutional climate celebrates the opportunity for students to fully explore all options available to them. Being undecided is viewed as an opportunity for students to develop personal, educational, career, and life plans, not just "deciding on a major."

Career development is a common thread in exemplary advising programs. Since many students select a major on the basis of its career implications, helping undecided students understand these relationships assists them in reaching more realistic choices.

Faculty involvement is another common theme. By providing quality training for faculty members who work with undecided students, not only do students benefit, but the institution benefits from advisers who are knowledgeable about issues outside their academic disciplines. In addition, students who are *decided* on a major receive better advising as a result of the additional training of faculty.

While the programs described above represent many different types and sizes of institutions and are diverse in their approaches, they offer ideas that are transferable to many settings. Programs such as these can provide inspiration for any institution exploring ways to address the needs of this special population of students who are not yet ready to declare a major.

Chapter 13

Are Undecided Students Here to Stay

Virginia N. Gordon

In the preceding chapters, many facets of advising and programming for undecided college students have been described. The profile gleaned from many years of research about them paints a picture of normal (for the most part) individuals who are in the process of developing vocational maturity, who are anxious about their lack of direction, and who need to learn the skills of exploration and decision making. A few students identified as "indecisive" need a more in-depth counseling approach.

Some common perceptions of undecided students have been reaffirmed in this monograph:

1. Most students who enter college with no specific academic or career direction in mind are considered to be in the exploratory stage of their development, and being "undecided" can be considered a temporary state.
2. Many "decided" students change their minds, especially during the freshman and sophomore years, and require the same type of academic and career advising as the entering undecided student.
3. There are many proven approaches, both administratively and programmatically, to help students make informed and satisfying educational and career choices.

There is a wide disparity in how different institutions of higher education perceive and serve undecided students. Where their needs are acknowledged, they can enjoy a wide variety of help through the transition of choosing or changing a major. Where their existence is not administratively acknowledged, they may drift and struggle on their own or even drop out.

The undecided student could be pictured as a product of our increasingly complex society, in which there is an overwhelming array of vocational choices. But the literature on these students goes back to the 1920s when occupational choices were supposedly more limited.

Undecided students could also be the product of a school system which does not provide the type of information and counseling that students need in order to explore and study vocational paths that are appropriate for their particular personal characteristics. Federally funded career education programs in the 1960s and 1970s were to provide this type of assistance to students at every grade level. Yet the number of students who entered college undecided remained about the same.

Indecision can also be attributed to the lack of first-hand experiences that students are afforded in today's work place. Some school districts have well-established "career shadowing" programs where students can experience first-hand work environments for which they have an interest. Most would agree, however, that the opportunities for real work experiences are more limiting to today's youth who are confined for the most part to minimum wage jobs.

In spite of decades of efforts by career education programs, societal and parental pressures, and the increasing number of highly structured, oversubscribed, and selective majors in many institutions which penalize late decision makers, why is the undecided student still with us? Anyone who has worked with large numbers of undecided students is aware of the complexity of this question. But some explanations can be considered.

Career development theory offers a logical explanation for indecision among traditional college-age students. Super (1957) has long described this stage of development as the "Exploratory" life stage where students must accomplish certain developmental tasks. These include the need to "crystallize" or define one's self in terms of life roles, interests, abilities and values. The identification of educational and occupational options are also included. The second task is to "specify" or choose one of the alternatives that have been identified. The third task is to "implement" or carry out a specific plan to reach the goals that have been specified. The need to accomplish these tasks is assumed to be common to youth who are in the age range of 15 to 24 years, according to Super (1957).

Some students are able to accomplish these tasks sooner than others. They may have acquired a vocational vision of themselves at an early age and built their identity around it. They may have been exposed to the knowledge and experience that provides realistic information about certain occupations. For these and other reasons, there are students who enter college very decided and pursue their vision without interruption.

Undecided students, on the other hand, enter college with enumerable reasons for not making educational and/or vocational decisions. Some enter college with many interests and have difficulty in "letting go" of them. They have no clear vision of who they are vocationally and need time to explore their options. Some entering college students are overwhelmed by all the choices that confront them. They lack basic knowledge about the course work associated with various academic programs and are uncertain of the occupational relationships to some majors, especially those that are not direct or obvious. Some lack the decision making skills necessary to sort through the alternatives in a logical and orderly way. A few have more serious problems for which psychological counseling is needed to help them overcome a debilitating indecisiveness that permeates all aspects of their lives.

If we acknowledge that undecided students are always going to enter our portals, do institutions have an obligation to assist them? Setting aside retention as a possible motive, what other considerations are important? First, the sheer numbers of undecided students indicate that this is a natural phenomenon that cannot be ignored. If we do not design interventions that intercept them at the beginning of the freshman year, we will have more upperclass students with a record of course work which could narrow options or prolong the path to a degree.

Second, if we agree with the premise that one of the purposes of higher education is to educate a future populace that will be an asset to society, then the concept of educating the "whole person" must be accepted. In order to assist students to mature and grow intellectually, socially, and personally, we must create environments in and out of the classroom where this can be accomplished. We should also feel obligated to help students see the value of their college experience for what it offers in the present. They must be exposed to and encouraged to participate in many experiences which will help them acquire the self-confidence and competencies needed to enjoy and make the most of college life. As Chapter

6 points out, this includes special populations of undecided students such as older adults, minorities, and commuters.

To state the obvious, most of what has been described and recommended in this monograph about undecided students can be applied to "decided" students as well. When we establish a caring, intrusively helpful environment, all students benefit. And for those who are struggling with important career and life decisions, especially the student who is admittedly undecided, we are obligated to offer the most complete, sensitive, and effective programs and services that are within our power to provide.

Reference

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Mail this form to: **National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience**, University of South Carolina, 1728 College Street, Columbia, SC 29208. Phone (803) 777-6029. FAX (803) 777-4699. Federal ID 57-6001153. **This page may be photocopied.**